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SIGDRIFA - BRYNHILD:
A STRUCTURAL PROBLEM IN
THE ELDER EDDA

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

MAY, 1965

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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A Structural Problem in the Elder Edda" submitted by
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ABSTRACT

This study will attempt to identify the woman of the Sigrdrífomál who is at once (it would seem) a valkyrie, a vǫlva (or prophetess), a warrior-maiden, and Brynhild of Burgundian tradition. To achieve this identification, the procedure will be to analyse the most central episodes in the legend of Sigrdrifa-Brynhild and Sigurd, her consort: Sigurd's dragon-fight, his awakening of Sigrdrifa-Brynhild, her dispensation of supernatural wisdom, and their betrothal. Various layers of the material will be analysed: the mythic basis of the material, the historical element, the fusion of myth with history, and the confusion which resulted from the Eddaic compilers' errors and misunderstandings. Finally, late accretions to the body of legend such as "amour courtois" convention and märchen-motives will be examined in connection with late versions of the legend, such as the Volsunga Saga and the Seyfridslied. From the investigation, presumably, some idea of the manner of the process of composition in the Elder Edda may be gleaned.

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CHAPTER 1

Three poems of the Codex Regius manuscript of the Elder Edda, Reginismál, Fáfnismál, and Sigrdrífomál, are concerned with one central character, Sigurd. Because the central concern of each of these poems is events in Sigurd's life, they are generally grouped together. The Reginismál tells of Sigurd's early upbringing by Regin, a smith. Regin is the son of a certain Hreidmar, who had been killed by Regin's brother, Fafnir. After Sigurd receives some advice about battle from Odinn (while on his way to fight with Lyngvi), he is egged on by Regin to kill Fafnir, who has meanwhile been transformed into a dragon. Sigurd kills Fafnir, but before dying, Fafnir instructs him in some supernatural beliefs (Fáfnismál). After the death of Fafnir, Sigurd learns (from some nuthatches) the location of a certain woman on a hill which is surrounded by a wall of fire. Sigurd rides to this location, Hindarfjall, passes through the fire, and awakens the woman, who is a valkyrie and is named Sigrdrifa. She had been imprisoned behind the fire by Odinn. The remainder of the Sigrdrífomál is concerned with the instruction she gives Sigurd in runic wisdom. At this point in the Edda, following the Sigrdrífomál, occurs the so-called Great Lacuna.

In the poems following the Great Lacuna, we are no longer concerned with a valkyrie who imparts supernatural wisdom but with a heroine named Brynhild who is sued by Sigurd on behalf of king Gunnar, and who later effects Sigurd's murder when she learns that Sigurd had deceived her. This latter material concerning Brynhild also occurs in the Nibelungenlied. The immediate question which

arises is: who is the woman valkyrie of the Sigrdrífomál whom Sigurd awakens? She is not identified as Brynhild in the Sigrdrífomál, nor does the name Brynhild occur before the Great Lacuna. Many scholars presume prima facie that this woman is Brynhild, since the name Sigrdrifa ('victory-drive') would be appropriate for a valkyrie and the valkyrie, then, would be the Scandinavian addition to the Brynhild of the Nibelungenlied (who is by no means a valkyrie). For the most part this theory is either held or presumed by these established authorities of Eddaic literature: Müllenhoff, Sijmons, Mogk, Finnur Jónsson, Boer,¹ Fuss,² and Hollander.³ R. C. Boer⁴ has most extensively propounded this theory. The theory has several lines of defense; for one, the author of the Volsunga Saga identifies the woman as Brynhild. Boer undertakes an elaborate metrical analysis of the poems in question to demonstrate that perhaps all these poems result from the combination of two originally separate poems. Therefore, he argues, the fornyrðislag stanzas of the Fáfnismál (40-44, the so-called 'Iðgnaspá'), stanzas 1 and 5 of the Sigrdrífomál, and the Helreið Brynhildar belong together.⁵ Similarly, the half

1. "Sigrdrífumál und Helreiðh," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie XXXV (1903), pp. 289-329.

2. "Brynhild," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie LXXII (1951), pp. 110-18.

3. The Poetic Edda (Austin, 1962). 2nd ed. See notes throughout.

4. Boer, op.cit.

5. Ibid., pp. 292-93.

stanza of the prosa after Sigrdrífomál 4 is likely derived from the Helreid. In this conjecture Boer agrees with Finnur Jónsson. The ljóðaháttir stanzas, then, (Sigrdrífomál 2-4, 20-21) are presumably from a different poem.⁶ With this metrical analysis and the presumption that there must have been two original poems, is associated another theory—that the Sigrdrífomál-material constitutes two separate motifs: an Erweckungssage and a Werbungssage.⁷ The remnants of the Erweckungssage occur in stanzas 2-4. To these stanzas are added the love interest found in stanzas 20-21, and the supposed two missing stanzas from the end of the Sigrdrífomál which once must have belonged to it, since the Völsunga Saga mentions the engagement of the woman and Sigurd.⁸ And as Heusler argues, the author of the Völsunga Saga would not have bothered with "diese lästige Doppelung" had it not already occurred in the Edda.⁹ If there were two missing strophes, concerning an engagement, they would confirm the interpretation of "astráð" (stanza 21) as "love-full wisdom"¹⁰ or simply as "love" (Müllenhoff), and would in addition ascertain that all

6. Ibid., p. 291. "Die fornyrðislagstropher sind reste eines anderen liedes als die ljóðaháttirstropher. Nach dieser ansicht gehören also str. 1.5 und die halbe strophe in der prosa nach 4 zusammen; zu dem anderen liede gehören str. 2-4, 20-21..."

7. H. W. J. Kroes, "Die Erweckung der Jungfrau hinter dem Flammenwall," Neophilologus XXXVI (1952), p. 144, and H. Larsen, "Sigrdrífa-Brynhild," Scandinavian Studies IV (1917), p. 68.

8. Boer, op.cit., p. 291.

9. Die Lieder der Lücke im Cod. regius der Edda [Abh. für H. Paul] (Strassburg, 1902), p. 17.

10. Boer, op.cit., p. 290: "Von früheren herausgebern als 'liebervoller rat' erklärt, wozu Fafn. 35.2 zu vergleichen ist, wird es von Müllenhoff als 'liebe' interpretiert, worin Sijmons a.a.o. st. 20 ihm beistimmt."

these ljóðaháttir stanzas belonged to one Erweckungssage. Thus, according to Kroes, the addition of Gunther (Gunnar) and the court at Worms (found in the Sigurdarkviða, Nibelungenlied, etc.,) is from a separate Werbungssage.¹¹

To divide all the material into two sources is patently to oversimplify it. One of the most confusing problems is that the woman of the Sigrdrífomál speaks like a prophetess but is explicitly named a valkyrie. The possibility that the woman in the Sigrdrífomál is a völva or prophetess has been explored most extensively by H. R. Ellis in The Road to Hel.¹² Ellis's scholarship would tend to obviate (or at least complicate irreparably) the theories of those who postulate the simple amalgamation of a story concerning a valkyrie with one concerning the love story of Brynhild. Nowhere else in Norse literature do we find a valkyrie-prophetess. However, the fact that the valkyrie is found in battle-dress would tend to corroborate her identification as Brynhild, who in the Nibelungenlied is a battle-maiden (Av. 7).

Another difficulty is that concerning the veracious historicity

11. Kroes, op.cit., p. 146.

12. "...there is no reason why we should not see the Sigrdrífomál as derived from the account of the seeking of a supernatural woman from behind a wall of fire akin to those in the poems Svipdagsmál and Skírnismál. The present form of Sigrdrífomál leads us to believe that gaining knowledge was the main object of the quest." loc.cit., pp. 182-83.

of the Sigurd-Brynhild material. One school of scholars—Vigfusson,¹³ Rudolf Much,¹⁴ Theodor von Grienberger,¹⁵ A. Beneke,¹⁶ and H. I. Hanna¹⁷ maintain that Siegfried-Sigurd is the mythical or legendary counterpart of the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius, who defeated Varus and six Roman legions in Teutoburg Forest, 9 A.D. Another school of criticism headed by the Danish scholar Dr. Gudmund Schütte believes that every incident in the Nibelungen material may be substantiated by historical occurrence.¹⁸ Thus, according to Schütte, Siegfried has his historical prototype in the Merovingian king Sigbert II (d. 575), Brynhild in Brunhild of Ispania (Isenland of the Nibelungenlied), Sigmund in Sigismund of Franconia (d. 523), and so on. But these historical theories are enthusiastically opposed by Friedrich Panzer¹⁹ who maintains that all the Siegfried material is derived from folk-tales. Thus, the Erweckungssage is derived ultimately from the 'bärensohn märchen' and the story of 'Stärker Hans.' The so-called Werbungssage then is derived from the 'brautwerber märchen.' And on the basis of the Seyfridslied, the last stanzas of the Fáfnismál, the Grípisspá, and a Norwegian stev of the 16th

13. Grimm Centenary, 1885-86. pp. 1-21.

14. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum V (1890), pp. 361-71.

15. Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und Literatur XXV (1892), pp. 323-5.

16. Siegfried und die Varusschlacht im Arnsburger Walde (München, 1909). pp. 10-22.

17. "Siegfried-Arminius," JEGP XIX (1920), pp. 439-85.

18. "The Nibelungen Legend and Its Historical Basis," JEGP XX (1921), pp. 291-327.

19. Studien zur Germanischen Sagen Geschichte. (München, 1912). Vol. II. pp. 44-125.

century ('Sivard og Brunild'), he decides that the woman in question is Krimhild (Guðrun) and not Brynhild at all. A host of critics, notably Larsen, oppose Panzer's theory.²⁰

Criticism in the main is agreed that there exist two different versions of the material (these, however, are distinct from the Erweckungssage and the Werbungssage which we mentioned earlier): one the Germanic material, and then the Norse version of the Germanic material. Thus, according to Golther,²¹ Lehmgrübner,²² Ellis,²³ Schneider,²⁴ and Genzmer,²⁵ the valkyrie material is a Norse accretion to the Germanic material. The only emphatic opposition to this is by Sijmons,²⁶ who states that the valkyrie material is in fact to be found in German myths, and was borrowed by the Norse. At any rate, assuming there are these two different versions, analysis must concern itself with the various amalgamations of the German (Burgundian) and Norse material, such as the Eddaic poems (Helreið Brynhildar, Grípisspá, the Guðrun poems, and the Sigurdarkviða), the Volsunga Saga, the Pidreks Saga, the Nornagests Rátt, the Seyfridslied, and the

20. "Sigdrifa-Brynhild," SS IV (1917), pp. 65-71.

21. Studien zur Germanische Sagengeschichte [Abh. der Bayreuth Akademie] XVIII (1888-9), pp. 401-24.

22. Die Erweckung der Walküre. (Halle, 1936).

23. op.cit.

24. Germanischen Heldensage (Berlin & Leipzig, 1928), I, pp. 144-70, and idem., "Verlorene Sigurddichtung," Arkiv för nordisk filologi XLV (1929), pp. 1-34.

25. "La poesia dei Nibelunghi nell'Edda," Studi Germanici V (1942), pp. 5-24.

26. Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie XXIV (1892), pp. 1-9.

aforementioned Norwegian stev, in order to decide what the ur-form of the myth was, and what then the various accretions are.

Our method of analysis will be to consider the particular episodes in Sigurd's life as they occur in the various versions: the dragon-fight and the awakening of the woman in particular. In Chapter II we shall concern ourselves primarily with the dragon-slaying as it occurs in Beowulf, the Edda and the Seyfridslied, and with various theories concerned with the identity of the dragon. Chapter III will examine the woman-figure of the Sigrdrífomál: to demonstrate that she is at once a vǫlva from the land of the dead, a valkyrie, and an awakened maiden from what resembles a 'dornröschen' folk-tale. Chapter IV will examine the Burgundian and historical material as it occurs in the Nibelungenlied. From that vantage point, some attempt shall be made to discover the manner in which this Burgundian-historical material became amalgamated with the Norse vǫlva myth. Chapter V will analyse the obviously late accretions to the material: aspects of 'amour-courtois' convention in the Nibelungenlied, the Pidreks Saga, the Edda, and in particular, the Vǫlsunga Saga, and finally what seem to be late marchen additions (the dornröschen and drachenkampf motives) to the material in the very late versions (the Seyfridslied, for example). By such an analysis we shall perhaps discover in what way the assimilation of legend occurred.

CHAPTER II

One of the central episodes in the Sigurd-Siegfried material is the slaying of the dragon, since this episode occurs in all sources of the legend: the Edda, the Volsunga Saga, the Ridreks Saga, and the Seyfridslied, and is mentioned (by way of reminiscence) in the Nibelungenlied. Snorri also makes brief reference to the dragon-slaying in the Prose Edda. It will be the purpose of this chapter to determine whether the dragon-slaying has any integral relationship to the awakening of the maiden in the Edda. In the Edda, it will be remembered, the poem concerning the dragon slaying, the Fáfnismál, and that of the awakening of the woman, the Sigrdrífomál, were not separated, and formed one poem, the several parts of which were linked together by prose inserts. We shall analyse, then, the significance of the dragon-slaying in the Fáfnismál by comparing this incident to the various parallel incidents in the other versions.

The earliest mention of a dragon-slaying in Germanic literature in connection with the Siegfried material is found in Beowulf, ll. 875-900. In this account of the slaying, however, Sigemund and not Siegfried is the dragon-slayer. The mistaken identity of the hero need not be confusing; as Hanna remarks: "The fact that the hero is called Sigemund instead of Siegfried does not offer any serious difficulties, since it would be easy to confuse one name with the other because of their similarity

in form, especially when they belonged to father and son."¹

The Beowulf recounting of the dragon-slaying emphasizes the heroic valor of Siegfried (Sigemund). The dragon is not named; he is only an obstacle, a testing block. In fact, the concern with valor and heroism is so much stressed by the Beowulf-poet that Klaeber has suggested that the excerpt which considers Siegfried's comradeship with his nephew Fitela (the Sinfjotli of the Volsunga Saga) is from a different lay than the dragon killing per se. The excerpt in question is as follows:

...Wael singes gewin, wīde sīdas,
 þāra þe gumena bearn gearwe ne wiston
 foehe ond fyrena, būton Fitela mid hine,
 þonne hē swulces hwaet secgan wolde
 eām his nefan, swā hiē ā wāeron
 aet nīða gehwām nýdgesteallan;
 haefdon ealfela eotena cynnes
 sweordum gesāged...²

The fact the Siegfried (Sigemund) and Fitela fight together ("aet nīða gehwām nýdgesteallan") in battle and against monsters indicates the spirit of the 'comitatus' which was a

1. JEGP XIX (1920), p. 459. cf. also Goebel, PMLA XII (1897) p. 464: "All commentators of Beowulf agree that Sigfrid and not Sigmund is the hero of whom this passage speaks," and idem., JEGP XVII (1918), p. 2: "...there seems to be little doubt that Siegfried's famous deed was transferred to Sigmund when through the latter the legend began to connect Siegfried with the chosen clan of the Volsungs and their special protector, Odinn."

2. Beowulf, ed. F. Klaeber. (Boston: Heath, 1950), p. 33. The translations of Beowulf have been taken from B. F. Gummere, The Oldest English Epic. (New York: MacMillan, 1935).

...the Wael sing's wanderings wide, his struggles
 which were never told to tribes of men,
 the feuds and the frauds, save to Fitela only,
 when of these doings he deigned to speak,
 uncle to nephew; as ever the twain
 stood side by side in stress of war,
 and multitude of the monster kind
 they had felled with their swords. [pp. 61-62]

prevalent notion in heroic poetry of that age. Because the Beowulf-poet had introduced the comparison of Beowulf and Siegfried as testimony to the heroic prowess of Beowulf, Siegfried's encounter with the dragon is simply construed as a test of valor, had has no other apparent significance. Routh noted, concerning dragons and monsters, that "...they are too persistent and purposeful. They symbolise, however accidentally, what the really great man of the age had to overcome."³ That Siegfried is able to overcome a dragon and by so doing, avail himself of a hoard, is a straightforward testament of his courage, a "frēcne dæde:"

Sigemund gesprong
 aefter dēadage dōm unlȳtel
 syððan wīges heard wȳrm acwealde,
 hordes hyrde; hē under hārne stān,
 aepelinges bearn āna genēdde
 frēcne dæde, ne waes him Fitela mid;
 hwaepre him gesāelde ðæt þæt sword purhwōd
 wrætlicne wȳrm, þæt hit on wealle aetstōd,
 dryhtlic īren; draca mordre swealt.
 Haefde āglāeca elne gegongen,
 þæt hē bēahhordes brūcan mōste
 selfes dōme.⁴

3. Routh, H. V., God, Man, and Epic Poetry. (Cambridge: 1927). II, p. 15.

4. Of Sigemund grew
 when he had passed from life, no little praise;
 for the doughty-in-combat a dragon killed
 that herded the hoard: under hoary rock
 the aetheling dared the deed alone,
 fearful quest, nor was Fitela there.
 Yet so it befell, his falchion pierced
 that wondrous serpent; --on the wall it struck,
 blest blade; the dragon died in its blood.
 Thus had the dread-one by daring achieved
 over the ring-hoard to rule at will,
 himself to pleasure... [Gummere, p. 62]

The entire excerpt is concerned with Sigemund's (Siegfried's) courage: he fights the dragon single-handed, he achieves the hoard 'by daring,' he is the 'doughty-in-combat.' And as a result of the deed he receives no small praise: "dōm unlýtél." The fact that the killing of the dragon is solely considered as an act of merit has some analogue in the Eddaic version. In the Grípisspá, for example, Gripir tells Sigurd:

þú munt maðr vera mæztr und sólg
oc hæstr borinn hveriom ígfri.

After Sigurd has killed the dragon, a test of bravery, he shall become a 'hero proven in fight:' a "gramr vígrisinn"[13].

It is possible that the lay originally concerned Sigemund and not Siegfried, contrary to the opinion of the aforementioned scholars. As Klaeber notes, at the time Beowulf was composed, "...no connection had yet been established between the Sigemund (Waelring) legends and those of Sigfrit and the Burgundians."⁶ The juncture of the two legends would have occurred, then, before the composition of the Eddaic lays, since in both the Fáfnismál and the Grípisspá Sigmund is directly referred to as the father of Sigurd. The Völsunga Saga would be the most extensive attempt to amalgamate what originally may have been

5. Grípisspá, 7. All Eddaic quotations are taken from the text of G. Neckel (revised by H. Kuhn), Die Lieder des Codex Regius, (Heidelberg, 1962). The translations are from H. Bellows, The Poetic Edda, (Princeton, 1936).

Of men thou shalt be on earth the mightiest
And higher famed than all the heroes. [p. 344]

6. Klaeber, op.cit., p. 161.

two separate legends. (Wael sing > Vqls ung, cf. Klaeber, op.cit., p. 160). The identity of the dragon-slaying hero at this stage of our investigation is not the central concern; we are rather concerned with noting that the dragon at one time had a greater significance than that imputed to him by the Beowulf-poet; that the dragon, in short, was esteemed to be much more than merely an obstacle which the meritorious hero had to vanquish.

The very fact that in the Edda version the killing of a dragon is combined with the awakening of a maiden has led some scholars to the conclusion that the dragon-slaying originated in primitive ritual; that the dragon represented the spirit of winter and the maiden the spirit of spring which could only be awakened after the death of the dragon. A. Kuhn was the first to notice this pattern in the Eddaic poems.⁷ Frazer has noted parallels to the ritual of dragon-killing: "...in more rigorous climates the dragon might stand for the dreary winter and the dragon-slayer for the genial summer. The myths of Apollo and the Python, of St. George and the Dragon have been interpreted as symbolizing the victory of summer over winter. Similarly it has been held with much probability that the Babylonian legend of Marduk and Tiamat reflects the annual change which transforms the valley of the Euphrates in spring."⁸

It is not unusual to suggest that dragon myths are derived

7. "Wodan," Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum V (1856), pp. 484-88.

8. J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (London: MacMillan, 1951). IV, p. 107.

from the seasonal pattern. Grendel in Beowulf, Müllenhoff believed, "represented the stormy North Sea of early spring, Grendel's dam the depths of the ocean, and the dragon the advent of wild weather in autumn."⁹ Klaeber¹⁰ as well endorses the feasibility of such an interpretation of Grendel and the dragon. Etymology of the word 'Grendel' would suggest again that Beowulf's fight with the monster is a mythic representation of man against elemental forces: 'grendel' is possibly a cognate of ON 'grindill,' 'storm.'¹¹ In the skeletal structure of the Eddaic version—that of a hero killing a dragon and awakening a woman—there would seem to be some similarity to other season-myth patterns.

One aspect of the Fáfnismál version of the dragon-slaying seems incontestable proof that the dragon-slaying did indeed have vegetation ritual significance. After Sigurð has killed the dragon, he takes the heart of the dragon, roasts it on a spit, then eats it. After incorporating the blood of the dragon, he is able to understand the speech of birds.

Sigurðr tók Fáfnis hiarta oc steicði á teini. Er hann hugði, at fullsteict væri, oc freyddi sveitinn ór hiartano, þá tók hann á fingri sínom oc scyniði, hvárt fullsteict væri. Hann brann oc brá fingrinom í munn sér. Enn er hiartblóð¹² Fáfnis kom á tungu hánom, oc scildi hann fuglsrædd.

9. Routh, op.cit., II, p. 13.

10. Klaeber, op.cit., p. xxv. "In the death of the aged hero, which means the coming on of winter, an old seasons-myth is seen to lie back of the prevailing culture-myth conception."

11. Ibid., p. xxix.

This incident would appear to be derived from a totemistic ceremony: the initiate imbibes the blood of a sacrificial victim in order to obtain mana. After incorporating the mana of the totem-animal, the initiate is in communion with his particular topocosm. J. G. Frazer discusses dragon-slaying ceremonies which resemble this aspect of the Fáfnismál version. In Bavaria, for example, a mock-dragon is killed by a knight in armor. The knight takes care to puncture (with his spear) a bladder of bullock's blood which is concealed within the dragon. This blood is the central concern of the ritual. The witnesses, "when the monster's blood streamed forth, eagerly mopped it up, along with the blood-soaked earth, in white cloths, which they afterwards laid on the flax-fields in order that the flax might thrive and grow tall."¹³ The outward similarities of Frazer's example and the Fáfnismál ceremony seem evident.

Frazer believes that the folktale concerning the dragon and the princess was originally derived from some such dragon-fertility ritual. I shall quote Frazer's synopsis of the dragon folktale in its entirety, because the synopsis serves as an

12. Fáfnismál, prosa.

Sigurð took Fafnir's heart and cooked it on a spit. When he thought that it was fully cooked, and the blood foamed out of the heart, then he tried it with his finger to see whether it was fully cooked. He burned his finger, and put it in his mouth. But when Fafnir's heartsblood came on his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. [Bellows, p. 380]

13. Op.cit., II, p. 164.

extremely interesting gloss for later versions.

A certain country is infested by a many-headed serpent, dragon, or other monster which would destroy the whole people if a human victim, usually a virgin, were not delivered up to him periodically. Many victims have perished, and at last it has fallen to the lot of the king's own daughter to be sacrificed. She is exposed to the monster, but the hero of the tale, generally a young man of humble birth, interposes in her behalf, slays the monster, and receives the hand of the princess as his reward.¹⁴

St. George and the Dragon is a well-known example of this folk-tale motif. What is important for our purpose is to note how the dragon-killing episode of the Lied vom hurnen Seyfrid or Seyfridslied reduplicates the incidents of Frazer's prototypical dragon-killing folktale. In the Seyfridslied, a king named Gybich had a beautiful daughter named Kriemhild. One day a dragon came flying along and carried Kriemhild to a high cliff in a dark forest, where he kept her for years. He slept with his head in her lap, and hoped to make her his wife when he regained his human form, for he was an enchanted princess. Seyfrid, son of a king, famed for his strength, chances through the forest and learns from a dwarf of Kriemhild's captivity. He kills the dragon and rescues Kriemhild. Evidently, the Seyfridslied-poet has adapted the Germanic version of the Siegfried legend to a popular dragon-folktale motif. Many commentators in fact have suggested that the Siegfried-dragon incident is entirely derived from folk fairy-tale material. R. W. Chambers (Beowulf: An Introduction, Ch. II) dismisses all theories suggesting that the dragon has ritual significance and suggests rather that all such legends are

14. Ibid., p. 155.

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON, FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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derived from folktales. Friedrich Panzer¹⁵ denies that there is any ritual or historical significance to the entire Siegfried material and maintains that it is based entirely on fairy stories of earlier origin; for example, those types which he designates as "Bärensohn" and "Märchen vom Brautwerber" are assumed sources for the later legend. It would seem incontestable that the dragon-story of the Seyfridslied was influenced by fairy-tale sources, but the Fáfnismál version is much more primitive. (This question will be explored in some detail in Chapter V). The reminiscence of a totemistic ceremony and the dragon-killing as a courage test would seem to pre-date the 'märchen' motif of the Seyfridslied. At any rate, the Fáfnismál version of Sigurd's dragon-killing exploit clearly contains some ingredients of primitive ritual.

One aspect of the Siegfried material that has received a good deal of critical attention is the possibility that Siegfried and the Burgundian cycle has a veracious historical basis. According to many scholars, Siegfried's historical precedent was Arminius, the Cheruscan chieftain who defeated Varus and six Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest, 9 A. D. We will more fully consider the validity of this argument in Chapter IV. For the present, it is sufficient to see how this historical analysis involves the dragon-slaying episode. H. I. Hanna¹⁶

15. Studien zur Germanischen Sagen Geschichte. (München, 1912). pp. 44-125.

16. "Siegfried-Arminius," JEGP XIX (1920). pp. 468-75.

has produced a good deal of evidence, such as similarities in family names and birthplaces, to show that Siegfried was the legendary representative of Arminius. Let us assume that Siegfried and Arminius are the same: if so, does Siegfried's killing of the dragon have a historical precedent? Hanna suggests that the dragon-killing is a symbolic representation of Arminius's annihilation of the Roman legions. She notes that dragons and monsters were common to Germanic folk-lore, and that in later medieval legend griffins were used to symbolize the devil. In the later Christian stories of St. Michael and St. George, the dragon symbolizes the devil who is slain by the knight, i.e., the Christian Church. With no more evidence than this, Hanna sums up her argument:

"But to some poetic mind which saw Rome, the great, the powerful nation, supposed to be almost invincible, making steady, victorious progress into the very heart of Germany, and then beheld the hero Arminius come forward and send that proud foe back in final defeat, it pictured itself as a fight with a dragon: Siegfried-Arminius, the undaunted hero, bravely attacks the monstrous dragon, Rome—an evil power in Germany—and slays him, i.e., kills his political power."¹⁷ As such, Hanna's argument is inconclusive, since the only parallel evidence she produces is concerned with much later legend than the Siegfried material.

17. Ibid., p. 471.

In a more recent article, E. O. Winstedt¹⁸ makes two suggestions which tend to corroborate Hanna's thesis. That Rome might be symbolized by a dragon was an idea, he conjectures, "which arose from the resemblance of the Roman troops in their flashing armour (unfamiliar to many of the ruder nations) marching in a long line along a winding road to a snake-like monster with large scales."¹⁹ The impression in the minds of the people "was confirmed by the adoption by the Romans of a red dragon standard." These two testimonies make the theory that the dragon represents Rome much more tenable. But even as such—although the symbolic representation of Rome's fall could have been added to an earlier dragon myth—two significant aspects of the Edda version of Siegfried's dragon-fight are left unexplained. These are: the fact that Siegfried drank the dragon's blood and was thereby able to understand the speech of birds, and the fact that the killing of a dragon is linked with the awakening of a woman in the Edda. The first of these difficulties is explicable in terms of the ritual significance of the dragon, which we discussed above. The second may be explained through examination of another aspect of dragon-lore; that is, the connection of dragons with life-after-death and the land of the dead.

Dragons occur almost invariably in association with a stone or mound in Germanic literature. In Beowulf, the dragon which

18. "Siegfried," Medium Aevum XXI (1952), pp. 25-29.

19. Ibid., p. 25.

Sigemund slays is "under hārne stān." The dragon of the Seyfridslied "ist auf einem stein gesessen." The dragon which Frotho kills (in Saxo Grammaticus's Gesta Danorum) guards a hoard from the top of a mound: "...a noble pile is kept by the occupant of the mount, who is a snake wreathed in coils."²⁰ The dragon which Beowulf kills is associated with a barrow, which is referred to as either 'hlaew' (2296) or 'beorh' (2299). The dragon of the Fáfnismál is associated with a certain Gnitaheld, which might at one time have been a mound. At any rate, these dragons are affiliated with either caves or mounds. Klaeber remarks on a primitive notion according to which, when a man died, he provided for himself a stone burial mound which was entered like a cave, wherein his belongings were placed. (Klaeber includes a picture of one of these stone mound-graves from Zealand, Fig. V). After death, presumably, he was transformed into a dragon. The dragon then would, according to primitive belief, guard the hoard of the dead man's belongings; that is, he would figuratively guard the mound. The Beowulf dragon does precisely this:

...Hē gesēcean sceall
 hord on hrūsan, ~~pāer~~ hē hāeðan gold
 warað wintrum frōð.²¹

Either 'cave' or 'mound' (or 'stone,' for that matter) would suggest a burial grave. Klaeber concludes, "(the) cave of the

20. Quoted by Klaeber, op.cit., p. 258.

21. Ibid., p. 86.

'Tis his doom to seek
 hoard in the graves, and heathen gold
 to watch, many-wintered... [Gummere, p. 121]

dragon represents one of those ancient, imposing stone graves covered with a mound which by later generations were regarded as 'enta geweorc.'²² Germanic dragons, then, would appear to have eschatological significance.

In Norse literature as well dragons are associated with mounds and seem to have the function of guarding the dead. The dragon Nidhogg of the Voluspá bears away the dead:

Par kómr inn dimmi	dreki fliúgandi
nær frann, neðan	frá Nidafjallom
berr sér í fígarom	— flýgr vøll yfir,
Nidhogg...	

There is perhaps in the meaning of 'Nidafjall' ('dark crags') a reminiscence of an earlier cave. The dragon, to be sure, is considered to be a custodian of the dead. H. R. Ellis Davidson, in Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, notes the relationship of a dragon to a dead man:

Both in England and Scandinavia the dragon came to be regarded as the guardian of the grave mound, watching over its treasures. Sometimes it is implied that he is to be identified with the dead man buried in the mound, and in some of the late legendary sagas it is said that a man after death became a dragon and guarded the treasure which he had taken to the howe with him.²⁴

22. Ibid., p. 209.

23. Voluspá, 66.

From below the dragon dark comes forth,
Nithogg flying from Nithafjall;
The bodies of men on his wings he bears,
The serpent bright... [Bellows, p. 26]

24. loc.cit., p. 161.

Although in this instance, Ellis Davidson does not analyse any of the "legendary sagas," she makes some mention of a similar issue in her earlier study, The Road to Hel. The legendary saga under examination is the Saga Eiríks Víförla. Eirík and his companions, in order to pass from this world to another (Paradise) are required to bypass a wall of fire which forms a barrier between the two worlds (Ch. II). This barrier is represented by a dragon; the new world is entered by leaping into the dragon's mouth. Ellis concludes that "...the dragon head evidently stands for the wall of fire..."²⁵ We shall later see (Chapter III) that the wall of fire in Norse myth symbolized the boundary between the land of the living and the land of the dead.

It is not unusual that a wall of fire should be the symbol for the barrier of life and death, since cremation was a prevalent ritual in Anglo-Saxon and Viking days. Similarly, dragons, who guard this boundary, would be conceived in terms of fire. The dragon in Beowulf is a fire monster:

Ðā se gaest ongan glēdum spīwan,
 beorht hofu baernan— brynelēoma stōd
 eldum on andan....
 Haefde landwara līge befangen
 bæle ond bronde....²⁶

25. The Road to Hel. (Cambridge, 1943). p. 190.

26. Beowulf, 2312-14; 2321-22.

Then the baleful fiend its fire belched out,
 and bright homes burned. The blaze stood high
 all landsfolk frightening....
 Folk of the land it had lapped in flame,
 with bale and brand. [Gummere, p. 122]

Dragons, then, would seem to have affiliations both with stone grave-mounds and with the fires of cremation. This seeming disparity need not cause confusion: both rites coexisted simultaneously in Dark Age England and Scandinavia.²⁷ Even with the dragons who are explicitly associated with caves or mounds, there is some reminiscence that they might also have been associated with fire. The dragon which Sigemund kills melts in its own heat: "wyrms hat gemealt." (897). The dragon in the Seyfridslied likewise begins to melt, "erst ward das horen weychen, das es ab von im randt." Whether, then, the dragon is associated with fire or with a burial mound (or both) he is assuredly a guardian of the world of the dead.

Since dragons are guardians of the world of the dead, the relationship of the Fáfnismál dragon to the incidents of the Sigrdrífomál becomes more clear. In Chapter III I shall demonstrate that, because the woman lies behind a wall of fire, she is associated

27. cf. Ellis Davidson, op.cit., p. 160. "We have...evidence from Stapenhill in Staffordshire, a cemetery of early Anglo-Saxon date, where there were five normal cremation burials, and also a number of inhumation graves with clear signs of burning, encircled by charcoal and blackened earth. Another Anglo-Saxon cemetery, at Kettering, had normal cremation burials together with inhumation burials enclosed between large stones bearing marks of fire. Similar evidence has been discovered in cemeteries of the Germanic peoples on the continent." cf. also Ellis, The Road to Hel, pp. 8-10.

with the land of the dead. If so, then presumably a quester, in order to reach the dead woman, would first have to bypass the dragon. It is fairly evident that the poet of the Reginsmál-Fáfnismál-Sigrdrífomál complex was aware of the eschatological significance of dragons. And granted such an awareness, the united purpose of these poems is discoverable: all are concerned in some way with the dispensation of cryptic, supernatural knowledge to a quester. In the Reginsmál, Hnikar or Odinn—who is most certainly the principal god of the dead world²⁸—tells Sigurd several folk superstitions in the form of gnomes (St. 20-25). It is expressly stated that these 'redes' are not discoverable to men alone, for Sigurd addresses Hnikar (Odinn) in the following manner:

Segðu mér þat, Hnícarr, allz þú hvárttveggja veizt
góða heill oc guma.

The particular redes dispensed by Odinn are concerned with wisdom in warfare, since at this stage Sigurd is an enterprising warrior. In the Fáfnismál, after Sigurd has wounded Fafnir, Fafnir dispenses to Sigurd information concerning supernatural powers (the Norns and Surt) and then proceeds to tell Sigurd what will happen to him in the future (St. 11-22). In the Sigrdrífomál a woman (who, as will later be shown, is awakened from death) indoctrinates Sigurd in the wisdom of runes (St. 6-12). If we consider the three

28. Ellis Davidson, op.cit., p. 45.

29. Reginsmál, 19.

Hnikar, say, for thou seest the fate
That to gods and men is given. [Bellows, p. 367]

poems in this way—that in each poem a representative of the underworld indoctrinates a quester (Sigurd) with supernatural knowledge—then these poems have an evident thematic unity.

Since the dragon-slaying embodies such a primitive myth, the naming of the dragon and the blood-feud in which he was involved must be late accretions to the legend. It is interesting to note that of all the sources which mention Sigurd's dragon fight, the only source which names the dragon Fafnir is the Edda (and the Volsunga Saga, which was composed from the Edda). The author of the Pidreks Saga no doubt knew of the blood-feud legend involving Fafnir, Regin and Sigurd, but he has named the dragon Regin, rather than Fafnir. Regin in the Edda is the smith. In the Seyfridslied the dragon is unnamed. In the Nibelungenlied the dragon which Sivrit slew is only mentioned in a reminiscence by Hagen:

Noch weiz ich an im mære daz mir ist bekant.
einen lintrachen sluoc des heledes hant.
dô badet er in dem bluote: des ist der helt gemeit.
von alsô fester hiute, daz in nie wâfen sît versneit.³⁰

The story of a blood-feud involving two brothers, one of who became a dragon, occurs only in the Edda. The story is recounted by the compiler of the Edda in a prose-link of the Reginsmál:

30. All quotations from the Nibelungenlied are from the edition of F. Zarncke (Halle: 1899). Strophe 100, p. 16. The translations are from G. Needler, The Nibelungenlied (New York, 1904).
Still more I know about him, that has to me been told.
A dragon, worm-like monster, slew once the hero bold.
Then in its blood he bathed him, since when his skin hath been
So horn-hard, ne'er a weapon can pierce it, as hath oft
been seen. [Needler, p. 17]

Loki slew Otr (who was in the guise of an otter). To atone for the death, Loki was forced to pay Hreidmar, Otr's father, a sum of gold. Otr's two brothers, Regin and Fafnir, asked for a share of the gold, which was refused. Fafnir slew Hreidmar and took the gold. It would seem as if an entirely different legendary cycle had been affixed to a dragon-killing myth. If we assume that the quester-seeking-knowledge material is the oldest discoverable theme of the three poems, then the Regin-Fafnir story is an addition. Another aspect of it would seem to mark it as late: like the dragon in the Seyfridslied who is an evil prince transformed, the fact that Fafnir, a man, is turned into a dragon (although the transformation is never fully explained) suggests that the compiler of the Edda had in mind a märchen-motif. Also, in the Reginismál we are told that Sigurd slew Lyngvi, the son of Hunding (concerning whom we learn from the Frá dauða Sinfjötla that he had fought with Sigurd's father Sigmund, who dwelt in Denmark). Sigmund had married Hjordis (daughter of Eylimi) who was Sigurd's mother. Now Eylimi and Hunding are clearly characters from a different and distinct poem cycle: the Helgi poems. The Frá dauða Sinfjötla and the prose-links of the Reginismál evidence the editorial zeal of the Eddaic compilers to combine the Helgi-cycle and the Sigurd-cycle to make one united poem, the Edda. And what we have of the combination is virtual confusion.

At this stage, we are perhaps able to analyse the composition of the Fáfnismál material. There would seem to be

three distinct aspects of the dragon-slaying legend: the dragon as an embodiment of winter, who is killed by a vegetation hero; the dragon as a symbol of the Roman army which was annihilated by Siegfried-Arminius; and the dragon as a guardian of the world of the dead which the quester had to obviate in order to pass into the realm of the dead. None of these three theories is mutually exclusive. What is likely is that the two most primitive aspects were somehow combined: that to a story of an unnamed hero gaining an education from Odinn (Reginismál), from an unnamed dragon (Fáfnismál) and finally from a woman (Sigrdrífomál) was added the myth of a vegetation hero killing a dragon whose blood (mana) put the hero in communication with his topocosm. (A similar combination of vegetation-myth and journey to the land of the dead occurs in the Skírnismál, as we shall see in Chapter III). At some stage this combined myth came in contact with a legend concerning the valor of a certain warrior, Siegfried-Arminius, who had slain a symbolical dragon. The amalgamation would have been immediate. And, although these other underlying significances would have been present in the material, the legend of dragon-slaying could have readily been conceived by a heroic society as a test of bravery, such as seems obvious with Sigemund's dragon-killing in Beowulf. The poet or compiler of the Edda, faced with this amorphous mass of legend and myth, would have attempted to impose some order. He clearly attempted to combine the Helgi legend with the Sigurd material. At their point of juncture he would seem to have

added another legend: that concerning the blood-feud of two brothers named Fafnir and Regin, whose brother had been killed by a god (Loki) and whose father Fafnir had slain.

Our next concern will be to analyse the Sigrdrífomál in the light of our findings concerning the Fáfnismál. We shall explore the eschatological meaning of the Sigrdrífomál and attempt to determine what process of layering occurred to transform a dead woman into a valkyrie, and to see if this transformation is integrally related to the dragon-slaying material.

CHAPTER III

The concern of Chapter III will be to establish the identity of the woman who is awakened by Sigurd in the Sigrdrífomál. She would seem, at first glance, to have several distinct attributes: notably, she resembles the vǫlvas of other Norse poems. But she is also referred to as a valkyrie. Since nowhere else in Norse literature is a valkyrie endowed with the function of a vǫlva, we shall proceed on the assumption that there may have been an amalgamation of two originally distinct woman-figures. The analysis will first consider the possibility that the woman is a vǫlva, and if any definite evidence can be established, I shall attempt to determine in what ways she resembles a valkyrie. To accomplish the second investigation, other valkyrie material shall have to be examined. When some understanding of what motifs are involved in the woman of the Sigrdrífomál has been attained, we shall perhaps be able to understand how the pattern of Sigurd killing a dragon and awakening a woman corresponds to more general hero-pattern myths, such as are investigated by deVries¹ and Campbell.²

First, to consider the question of the vǫlva. A frequently recurring motif in the Edda is that of a quester making a journey

1. Heroic Song and Heroic Legend, tr. B. J. Timmer. (London, 1963).
cf. esp. pp. 210-26.

2. Hero With a Thousand Faces. (New York, 1949).

to acquire particular supernatural information or knowledge. In Baldrs Draumr, Odinn journeys to Niflhel to a seeress in order to procure information as to the portent of Baldr's dreams. Freyja in the Hyndluljóð awakens a giantess in order to discover the noble races of men. Svipdag in the Groǵaldr awakens his dead mother Groa in order to obtain information regarding a journey he will make. In each of these instances the vǫlva must be aroused from a suspended state of death; in each case the journey is to a nether region—the realm of death. And in each case the vǫlva is a woman. Similar incidents occur in the Helreid Brynhildar, where Brynhild is stopped by a giantess on the route to Hel; and in the Skírnismál, where Skirnir goes to Jotunheim to petition Gerðr, a giantess. Odinn in the Völuspá presumably has aroused a giantess in order to learn the fate of the world. Perhaps a similar situation is to be presumed in the Völuspá hin skamma; it is likely a vǫlva that is involved, for the repeated lines,

Mart segiom þér oc munom fleira,
vǫromz, at vita svá viltu enn lengra?³

are reminiscent of those in Völuspá, Baldrs Draumr, and Hyndluljóð, where the seeress must be repeatedly coaxed to divulge information. Women, it seems, have some uncanny power of prophecy. Tacitus observed that the Germans ascribed peculiar

3. Hyndluljóð, 36.

I tell thee much yet more lore have I;
Thou needs must know this--wilt still know more?
[Bellows, p. 229]

powers of prophecy to their women:

Inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid et providum
putant, nec aut consilia earum aspernantur aut
responsa neglegunt.⁴

Ellis has devoted a large part of her book, The Road to Hel,⁵ to establish conclusively that the dead possessed supernatural knowledge and could be invoked in an effort to obtain that knowledge. A combination of these two sources of knowledge—the dead and woman—that is, the dead woman, becomes the obvious instrument for the dispensation of supernatural knowledge.

One of the most important aspects of this journey to the land of the dead is that frequently the quester is required to pass through a wall of fire in order to reach either the dead person or the realm of death. The fire represents the barrier between life and death; the origin of its symbolic significance may well lie in the fact that the Germanic peoples cremated their dead. Perhaps the dead would also pass through the fires of cremation in order to be located in the underworld. There are several examples of this passing through a fire in Norse literature.⁶ In the Hervarar Saga the division between living and dead is marked by a ring of fire around the burial howe ('haug'). Hervqr declares that she is surrounded by flames

4. Germania, VIII.

5. loc.cit., pp. 65-119.

6. The following examples from saga literature are for the most part derived from Ellis, op.cit., pp. 170-97.

at that instant when she seems most to be in contact with her dead father, Angantyr:

Hirðumat faelask	við fngsun slíka
þótt of all ey	eldar brenni.

In the Egils Saga ok Asmundar there is another incident in which a giantess crosses a wall of fire in order to reach the underworld. Ellis observes, "it is this wall of fire which forms the last barrier to be passed in the lowest depths (undirdjúp)." ⁸ In the Fjölsvinnsmál Svipdag wishes to make a journey to gain the love of the giantess Menglǫð. To get to Menglǫð he must enter a 'shining hall' (called Lýr), which is 'hedged about by wall of flickering flame.' We may deduce from the series of questions that Svipdag asks his mother Groa in the first part of the Svipdagsmál (i.e., the Grœgaldur) that he is preparing to make a journey to the land of the dead. He receives spells from her which will enable him to calm a raging sea, to loosen fetters laid upon him, to preserve him from death, and to evade the power of dead women. It is noteworthy as well that Menglǫð is a sleeping maiden whom only Svipdag has the power to awaken, and that she is located on a mountain (called Lýfja). In the Skírnismál, Skirnir asks

7. Gordon, E. V., An Introduction to Old Norse. (Oxford, 1927). p. 147.

I seemed to be lost	between the worlds
While around me	burned the fires.

8. Ellis, op.cit., p. 175.

to borrow Freyr's horse in order that he may penetrate the wall of fire and thus gain entrance to Jotunheim, where Gerðr was first seen by Freyr:

Mar gefðu mér þá þagn er mik um myrkqvan beri
vísan vafrloga.

Although there is no account of Skirnir passing through the ring of flame, he does pass a shepherd who is sitting on a howe at the entrance to Gymir's court, and addresses him thus:

Segðu þat hirðir er þú á haugi sitr
oc varðar alla vega.

The howe ('haug') is generally connected with the dead.

Some of the ingredients which are present in these various episodes concerning a quester going through a wall of fire to awaken a dead person and to receive advice, are present in the Sigrdrifa material. Near the end of the Fáfnismál Sigurd receives intelligence of a sleeping maiden on Hindarfjall. I shall consider this poetic text as the oldest information available in Norse.

Salr er á há Hindarfjalli
allr er hann útan eldi sveipinn.¹¹

The hall—again on a mountain—is encircled with fire. The

9. Skírnismál, 8.

Then give me the horse that goes through the dark
And flickering flames. [Bellows, p. 110]

10. Ibid., 11.

Tell me, herdsman, sitting on the howe,
and watching all the ways... [Bellows, p. 111]

11. Fáfnismál, 42.

A hall stands high on Hindarfjall
All with flame is it ringed without.
[Bellows, p. 384]

following stanza repeats this information, only now the mountain (fell) is not named, and the fire is referred to by a kenning.

Veit ec á fialli folcvítr¹ sofa
oc leicr yfir lindar vadi.²

It is noted explicitly that the woman is asleep. Death could easily have been construed as sleep once the original significance had been lost. In what is called the Sigrdrífomál, the first stanza represents the words of a woman who has been awakened:

Hvat beit brynio? hví brá ec svefni?³
hverr feldi af mér fqlvar naudir?

It is true that sleep (svefni) is mentioned explicitly in the first line quoted; but the 'fqlvar naudir' is an unusual metaphor merely to connote sleep. 'Fqlvar' means pale and occurs frequently in compounds such as 'na-folr,' 'pale corpse.' It is a metaphor for death. Since 'naudir' (or 'naudr'?) is corrupt in the text at any rate, possibly 'fqlvar naudir' is a corruption of some form of 'na-folr;' as it stands the

12. Ibid., 43.

On the mountain sleeps a battle-maid;
About her plays the bane of the wood.
[Bellows, p. 384]

13. Sigrdrífomál, 1.

What bit the byrnie? how was broken my sleep?
Who made me free of the fetters pale?
[Bellows, p. 389]

meaning is very obscure, to say the least.¹⁴ If 'fǫlvar' does refer to death, then the opening stanza is the words of a dead woman who is forcibly awakened for the benefit of her prophetic power. The stanza, interpreted as such, agrees in form with similar opening stanzas in the Svipdagsmál and Baldrs Draumr:

Hvat er manna þat mér ókunna
er mér hefir aukit erfit sinni?
var ec snivin snióvi oc slegin regni¹⁵
oc drifin döggo dauð var ec lengi.

It is true that the stanza immediately following in the Sigr-drífomál makes it quite clear that sleep is intended.

Lengi ec svaf lengi ec sofnuð var
long ero lyða lae.¹⁶

But this stanza is in ljóðaháttir rather than fornyrðislag metre; Bellows (following, no doubt, Boer and Jónsson) groups it with the invocation stanzas (3-4) and not at all with Stanza 1. Stanza 1 seems to be the more primitive stanza with its faint suggestion

14. Ernst Schwentner, "Zu Sigdrífumál 1,2," Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur XLIII (1918) pp. 348-49, and Klaus Fuss, "Brynhild," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie LXXII (1951) p. 111, corroborate our reading of 'fǫlvar naudir' as 'fetters of death.' Oddly enough, it does not seem to have occurred to either of them that Sigdrífa was a vǫlva awakened from death. Gering's gloss (Die Edda, Leipzig, 1892), p. 211, is noteworthy: "...Die fahlen fesseln, d. h. den zauber, der sie in totenähnlichem schlafe gefesselt hielt. Der vergleich 'fahl wie eine leiche' begegnet öfter in der altnordischen literatur."

15. Baldrs Draumr, 5.

What is that man unknown to me
That has made me travel the troublous road?
I was snowed on with snow and smitten with rain
And drenched with dew; long I was dead. [Bellows, p. 197]

16. Sigrdrífomál, 2.

Long did I sleep my slumber was long,
Long are the griefs of life. [Bellows, p. 389]

that the woman has been awakened from death. She is accessible only by the crossing of the ring of flames, which in itself provides an obvious parallel to the examples mentioned previously.

The identification of the woman of the Sigrdrífomál as a vǫlva would tend to corroborate the conjecture I made in Chapter II: that the dragon of the Fáfnismál represented the barrier which the quester had to bypass in order to reach the land of the dead, and that the woman is awakened by the quester in order for him to acquire supernatural knowledge. It is not fortuitous, then, that the awakening of the woman is coupled with the killing of the dragon. We suggested as well in Chapter II that the dragon seemed to have some ritual significance which originated in a vegetation ceremony. It is not necessary that the two myths—one concerning a quest of the underworld and the other concerning a vegetation ceremony—be mutually exclusive; rather, these two myths are to be seen as different planes of meaning of a general mythic pattern. In general, the pattern of myth, on whatever plane, is involved with the pattern of origin myths. The purpose of ritual is to bring about some form of renewal or rebirth into a new mode of being. Campbell discusses the general mythic pattern:

SEPARATION—INITIATION—RETURN: which might be termed the nuclear unit of the "monomyth"...
 A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.¹⁷

17. Campbell, op.cit., p. 30.

What we are concerned with establishing is that both myths: the hero killing the dragon and awakening the woman (or winning the maiden, as the later Seyfridslied has it) and the hero journeying to the underworld, are different facets of an established mythic pattern. DeVries suggests that this mythic pattern is derived ultimately from the ritual of initiation, or what van Gennep¹⁸ has called the "rites de passage."

A sexual element is therefore inseparably linked up with the initiation. This often takes the form of orgiastic promiscuity; the newly-gained virility has first to run its full course in unbridled vehemence so as afterwards to be canalized, often by the strictest regulations of social life. Now is also the time that the marriageable young man must choose himself a wife, and he often has to prove himself worthy of her by giving proofs of his valor. Is it then so strange that, in the legends, dragon and maiden are so closely linked together?¹⁹

Mircea Eliade has discussed the same initiatory pattern in Myth and Reality.²⁰ It is not curious therefore that the

18. A. van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, tr. M. Vizedom and G. Caffee. (Chicago, 1960). cf. pp. 1-13 for a cursory explanation of his theory.

19. de Vries, op.cit., p. 221.

20. loc.cit., p. 81: "The initiation myths and rites of regressus ad uterum reveal the following fact: the "return to the origin" prepares a new birth, but the new birth is not a repetition of the first, physical birth. There is properly speaking a mystical rebirth, spiritual in nature—in other words, access to a new mode of existence (involving sexual maturity, participation in the sacred and in culture; in short, becoming 'open' to spirit). The basic idea is that, to attain a higher mode of existence, gestation and birth must be repeated; but they are repeated ritually, symbolically."

dragon exists in ritual myths which involve a courage test for the hero to overcome; it is also fairly evident why the dragon is the custodian of the world of the dead. For as van Gennep has conclusively established,²¹ the passage from life into death is construed symbolically as a birth and initiation; it is only a representation on a different plane of the passage into manhood which deVries has discussed, or what Eliade called the 'attainment of a higher mode of existence.' To be reborn as a new man the initiate must bypass the dragon.²² The quest of the underworld is, then, another representation of the heroic quest which involves the winning of a woman. What we arrive at finally is that our two original myths: the quester awakening the vǫlva and the quester winning a woman are different aspects of a general mythic pattern. This, to be sure, shows at once why the two myths would be found in combination. It explains as well why the compiler of the Edda assumed the vǫlva to be a woman whom Sigurd had won: the compiler was no doubt aware of a mythic pattern which provided as a reward for killing a dragon the winning of a maiden.

The fact that the pattern of a quester awakening a dead vǫlva to acquire supernatural knowledge is combined with the pattern of a hero killing a dragon and winning a woman is not fortuitous. It is interesting to note that a similar com-

21. op.cit., pp. 146-65.

22. cf. also deVries, op.cit., p. 222.

bination occurs in the Skírnismál: the vegetation-myth of Freyr uniting with Gerðr to fecundate a crop is mixed with the notion of a journey through a wall of fire to the underworld.²³

Some scholars,²⁴ no doubt realizing with us that the killing of a dragon and the awakening of a maiden represented a vegetation myth, have scrutinized the Sigrdrífomál for literary evidence to substantiate their conjectures. They have fallen inevitably upon stanzas 3 and 4, which stanzas, as far as I am able to judge, have nothing to do with a vegetation cycle, and precious little to do with the Sigrdrifa material. I shall quote those stanzas in question:

Heill dagr heilir dags synir
 heil nótt oc nipt.
 Breidom augom lítid ocr þingig
 oc gefit sitiondom sigr.²⁵

Here the speaker is hailing the day and the "sons of day" (whatever that may mean). Night and the daughter of night are also hailed. "Those sitting" ask to be given victory. It is curious that scholars have found any suggestion in these lines of a fertility cycle. In most world literatures there are

23. cf. U. Dronke, "Art and Tradition in the Skírnismál," English and Medieval Studies presented to J. R. R. Tolkien, pp. 250-68; and G. Turville-Petre, Origins of Icelandic Literature (Oxford, 1953), p. 19.

24. cf. for example, H. W. J. Kroes, "Die Erweckung der Jungfrau hinter dem Flammenwall," Neophilologus XXXVI (1952) p. 156; idem., "Der Baldermythus und der 2. Merseburger Zauberspruch," Neophilologus XXXV (1951), p. 201; and H. Nauman, Primitive Gemeinschaftskultur (Halle, 1924), p. 90.

25. Hail, day! Hail, sons of day!
 And night and her daughter now!
 Look on us here with loving eyes,
 That waiting we victory win.

[Bellows, p. 389]

metre of the most modern segments of the poem—the stanzas concerning runes [6-12] and the Christian counsels at the end of the poem [22-37]. The form of the story is adequate evidence for an original vegetation myth; the significance of this myth likely had been forgotten at the time of composition. Stanzas 3 and 4 were included by the compiler at random, and have no relevance at all to the vegetation myth which lies underneath the structure of the poem.

We are now in a position to examine another aspect of the woman of the Sigrdrífomál: her valkyrie nature. If we can satisfactorily establish what were the common and most frequently recurring features of valkyries, we may be able to decide how this woman-figure fits the general pattern of valkyrie. For the present, we have no other reasons to assume that she is a valkyrie but that the compiler names her a valkyrie, that she has a name (Sigrdrifa) appropriate to a valkyrie, and that she is dressed in battle clothes.

The original nature of the valkyries is obscure. Many scholars³⁰ locate the original valkyries in three inscriptions found in 1920 at Housestead, a fortress on Hadrian's wall. The inscriptions are from gravestones of German soldiers who died during the rule of Severus (222-235). They are dedicated to Mars Thincsus and two Alaisiagi in each case:

30. cf. for example, A. H. Krappe, "The Valkyries," MLR XXI (1926), pp. 55-73, and H. R. Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964). pp. 61-62.

- (1) Deo Marti Thincso et duabus Alaisiagis Bede
et Fimmilene et numini Augusti Germani cives
Tuihanti...
- (2) Deo Marti et duabus Alaisiagis et numini Germani
cives Tuihanti cunei Frisiorum...
- (3) Duabus Alaisiagis Baudihiillie et Friagabi³¹ et
numinibus Augustorum numerus Hnaudifridi.

It is necessary to note here that in each instance there are two Alaisiagi; it would seem that they occurred only in pairs. Because they seem to exist in pairs, Krappe has concluded that they are Germanic counterparts of other frequently occurring IndoEuropean divine twins, or 'Dioskuroi.' He notes that the Greek 'dioskuroi,' for example, functioned originally as weather-gods. Krappe's contention is that the Alaisiagi, since they also occur in pairs (and for no other apparent reason), must have been weather-gods, or the Germanic equivalents of the Greek 'dioskuroi.' With such an interpretation in mind, he tentatively suggests³² that 'alaisiagi' is derived from Prim. Germ. *aisjan, 'to rush' or 'to hurry,' connoting movement of the wind (cf. ON 'eisa'). A more satisfactory etymology, however, is offered by Henning,³³ who suggests that the word derives from the OE prefix ae- and the Gothic 'leiseigs;' he translates 'alaisiagi,' then, as "ad edocendum idoneae." Such a derivation is corroborated by Sievers³⁴ who

31. Quoted by Krappe, op.cit., p. 56.

32. Following Th. Siebs, Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie XXIV (1891), p. 434.

33. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum XLII (1898), pp. 193-4.

34. Th. Sievers, Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur XVI (1892), p. 259.

connects 'alaisiagi' with the Germanic root *aiz- found in OE 'arian,' 'to honor,' and translates "the all-honored ones." This interpretation (as 'all-honored' women) would agree with the traditional readings of Mars Thincsus, whom the two alaisiagi accompany, as *Tiwaz,³⁵ the presiding god of the þing. If this is true, then Gutenbrunner's attempts to derive the goddesses from juridicial processes seems tenable: that *bed- represents the invitation to the þing and that *fimil- represents the conclusion or the judgement.³⁶ The names of two Alaisiagi, it will be remembered, were Bede and Fimmilene.

It would seem that Krappe's attempt to derive the valkyries from the weather-gods or 'dioskuroi' is untenable, particularly when we consider that the aspect which he stresses most—that the alaisiagi occur in pairs—is not at all true of the valkyries, who generally appear in threes or multiples of three. Similarly, Krappe's attempt to compare Sigrun (presumably a valkyrie) in the Helgakviða Hundingsbana I to the Heavenly Twins of the Homeric Hymn because she saves Helgi from shipwreck seems spurious; it does not seem to have occurred to Krappe that Sigrun was Helgi's 'kynfylgja.'³⁷ We shall shortly examine the Norse conception of the 'fylgja' in order to see how that conception was confused with the valkyries.

35. J. deVries, Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte (Berlin & Leipzig, 1937), I, pp. 172-75.

36. "Die germanischen Götternamen der antiken Inschriften," Rheinische Beiträge und Hülfsbücher zur germanischen Philologie und Volkskunde XXIV (Halle, 1936), p. 44.

36. A fairly lengthy discussion of 'fylgja' and 'kynfylgja' is given by H. R. Ellis, The Road to Hel, pp. 127-50.

There is, then, no incontestable evidence that the alaisiagi are the original valkyries. And if the valkyries were 'dioskuroi,' it would be difficult to reconcile their weather-god function with their more frequently occurring function as goddesses of the slain. Until there is more evidence to substantiate the contention that alaisiagi and valkyries are similar, we must discount such conjectures. Similarly, attempts to connect valkyries with the 'idisi' of the first Merseburg charm³⁸ seem suspicious. The charm is as follows:

Eiris sazun idisi,	sazun hera duoder,
suma hapt heptidun,	suma heri lezidun
suma clubodun	umbi cuoniouuidi
insprinc haptbandun,	inuar uirgandun.

39

Bostock translates the charm: "Once the women were seated on the ground, here and there, one company bound a captive, one company hindered the host, one company picked at fetters: escape from the fetters, escape from the foes. Repeat three times."

Bostock notes that 'idis' was a common Germanic word for 'woman.' The word 'idis' has a correlative in ON 'dísir,' who are for the most part beneficial women that (as in the Sigrdrífomál) help mothers at childbearing.⁴⁰ Surely in Norse the distinction between beneficial disir and blood-thirsty valkyrie is clear enough.

38. cf. H. R. Ellis Davidson, op.cit., p. 63.

39. J. Knight Bostock, Old High German Literature (Oxford, 1955), p. 17.

40. R. Kögel, "Idis und Valküre," Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur XVI (1892), pp. 134-5.

One aspect of the Norse valkyries is stressed by Neckel⁴¹ and Ellis Davidson: that the valkyries are associated most often with blood and battle. Ellis Davidson considers the portrait of the valkyries in Brennu Njala Saga (CLVII) to be the most primitive. It is the so-called Darradarljóð:

Blood rains from the cloudy web
On the broad loom of slaughter.
The web of man, grey as armour
Is now being woven; the valkyries
Will cross it with a crimson weft.

"The warp is made of human entrails,
Human heads are used as weights;
The heddle-rods are blood-wet spears;
The shafts are iron-bound, and arrows, shuttles,
With swords we will weave this web of battle."⁴²

The association here of valkyries with battle and carnage is reminiscent of a picture in Víga-Glúms Saga (XXII) of valkyries who soak a battle-field with blood before an imminent battle. The names of three valkyries are synonyms for 'battle:' Hlökk, Hildir, and Guðr. The word 'valkyrie' means 'chooser of the slain.' The name of one of the valkyries, Herfjoturr, means 'war-fetter,' and is applied to a kind of paralysis experienced in battle.⁴³ Several aspects of the Norse valkyries—notably, that they appear in groups of three and that they are associated with birds of prey—are similar to the Irish war-goddesses. Such a similarity has led C. Donahue to conclude that the valkyries

41. G. Neckel, Walhall, Studien über germanischen Jenseitsglauben (Dortmund, 1913), pp. 75-80.

42. Njal's Saga, tr. M. Magnusson and H. Palsson (Penguin, 1964), p.349.

43. Ellis Davidson, op.cit., p. 64. cf. also K. Maurer, "Die Valkyrjen Hlökk und Herfjotr," Zeitschrift für deutsche Mythologie II (1885), pp. 341-43, and Neckel, op.cit., p. 76.

result from Celto-Germanic development of the time when there was a close contact between the two civilizations:

If the early valkyries were mere vague battle-demons it is not safe to assume that they were at the same time battle-goddesses who might be objects of a cult. In the close similarity of the early valkyries to the Irish war-goddesses lies the best evidence for the assumption that the war-goddesses and valkyries are products of a common Celto-Germanic development.⁴⁴

Donahue concerns himself for the most part with the etymological similarities of OE 'beadu' ('battle'), ON 'boð', Celtic 'bodú' (which occurs in the name of the war-goddess Bodb) and the name of the Germanic goddess mentioned by Tacitus, Baduhenna. It is adequate for our purposes to reemphasize Donahue's stress: that the valkyries are most properly war-goddesses. Any attempts to derive the valkyries from 'dioskuroi' or exvotos of 3rd century inscriptions seem specious. Logically, however, the valkyrie war-goddesses would develop into noble battle-ladies riding horses through the air and choosing slain warriors for Óðinn, and ultimately into the table-waitresses who serve the 'einherjar' in Snorri's Edda and the Éiríksmál. But they are fundamentally war-goddesses associated with battle and bloodshed.

Before we return to the valkyrie of the Sigrdrífomál, we must examine the Norse conception we mentioned earlier, the 'fylgja' or 'kynfylgja.' It is demonstrable, I think, that

44. "The Valkyries and the Irish War-Goddesses," PMLA LVI (1941), p. 11.

although valkyries were often confused with 'fylgjur,' the conception of the valkyrie as war-goddess is distinct from the conception of the 'fylgja.' H. R. Ellis has concisely analysed the nature of the 'fylgja' and related female guardians, the 'hamingjur' and the 'dísir;' I shall reproduce briefly Ellis's discussion.⁴⁵ It would seem that the 'kynfylgja' originated in the animal 'fylgja.' One classic example of an animal 'fylgja' is found in Brennu Njala Saga:

One day Njal and Thord were sitting out of doors. There was a goat which used to roam about the home-meadow and no-one was allowed to drive it away.

Thord said, "That's very strange."

"What do you see that seems to you so strange?" asked Njal.

"The goat seems to be lying in the hollow there drenched in blood," replied Thord.

Njal said that there was no goat there, nor anything else.

"Then what is it?" asked Thord.

"It means that you must be a doomed man," said Njal. "That was your fetch (fylgja) you must have seen. Be on your guard."⁴⁶

In the same saga, Hoskuld has a dream in which a white bear represents Gunnarr; Hoskuld tells from this that Gunnarr is approaching the house (XXIII). From these two examples, as Ellis says, "...we get the impression that the life of the animal form depends on the life of the man it accompanies—or possibly this should be put in reverse order and we should say that the human life is dependent on the well-being of the

45. The Road to Hel, pp. 122-38.

46. Njal's Saga, trans. M. Magnusson and H. Palsson, p. 109.

animal fylgja...."⁴⁷ At length, the 'fylgja' loses its animal form and assumes the form of a woman. Thus in the Volsunga Saga, Signy is warned against her approaching marriage by her 'kynfylgja' (IV). In the Víga-Glúms Saga, the word 'hamingja' is used to denote a female guardian spirit of this sort. Glumr dreams and believes that he sees a huge woman walking towards him. His analysis of the dream is as follows:

Draumr er mikill ok merkiligr, en svá mun ek hann
ræða, at Vígfúss modurfæðir minn mun nú ver andaðr,
ok mundi kona sjá hans hamingja vera....Ok var hann
un aðra menn fram um flesta hlúti at virðingu, ok
hans hamingja mun leita sér þangat staðfestu, sem
ek em.⁴⁸

There is one other conception of guardian women in Norse literature; this is the dís. In the Atlamáli Glaumvqr describes a dream in which her husband's death is foreshadowed:

Konor hugðac daugar	koma í nótt hingat
vaerit vart búnar	vildi þik kíosa
byði þér brálliga	til beccia sinna ⁴⁹
ec qved aflima	orðnar þér dísir.

This stanza is paraphrased in the Volsunga Saga: "Then I

47. Ellis, op.cit., p. 128.

48. Víga-Glúms Saga, ed. Turville-Petre, IX, p. 15: "This is a great and remarkable dream, and I would read it thus: Vigfuss my grandfather must be dead, and the woman must be his hamingja, for he was nearly always above other men in honor; and his hamingja must now be seeking an abode where I am."

49. Atlamáli, 28.

I dreamed that by night	came dead women hither,
Sad were their garments	and thee were they seeking;
They bade thee come swiftly	forth to their benches,
And nothing, methinks, could	the Disir avail thee.
[Bellows, p. 509]	

thought dead women came in here; they were gloomy, and they chose you for husband; it may be that it was your dísir." (XXXV). It would seem that we are dealing with one conception, whether it bear the name 'fylgja,' 'kynfylgja,' 'hamingja' or 'dís.'

If it is true that the woman guardian originated with the notion of an animal fylgja, then it is not at all surprising that there are frequently animal remnants attached to these female guardian spirits. Thus, I think, the swan-maidens in the Volundarkviða are descended from an earlier swan 'fylgja.' Ellis's description of guardian women is noteworthy here: the guardian spirit "is frequently attended by a company of similar women, generally three or nine in number. She seems to be looked on as the wife of the man to whom she has joined herself."⁵⁰ Thus, in the Volundarkviða, the three maidens who are found spinning flax are attached to Slagfíðr, Egill, and Volundr. They spend a period of seven years with their respective husbands and then depart. It may be that these swan-maidens are not female descendants of an animal 'fylgja,' as we suggested. But there is absolutely no evidence to assume that they are valkyries, as the compiler of the poem has done (we are told in the prose: "Þá tó vóro valkyrior"). The function and occupation of these swan-maidens agree in no wise with the functions of valkyries; the only remote similarity is that both are associated with birds and flying. Nowhere else are valkyries associated with swans.

50. op.cit., p. 138.

There is another example of a 'fylgja' being misnamed a valkyrie in the Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar. The true nature of this 'fylgja,' named Svava, is revealed in the final stanzas of the poetic text. Helgi is mortally wounded; indeed, his death has been foreshadowed by the appearance of his 'fylgja,' which is mentioned in the text:

Reið á vargi er recqvíð var 51
flíð eitt, er hann fylgio beiddi.

The 'flíð' is a woman, Helgi's 'kynfylgja.' Although she is not identified as Svava, it is perhaps understood that Svava is the 'fylgja' by the poet. Helgi sends Sigr to summon Svava, who comes to him on his death-bed. Helgi realizes that they will never meet again [40], and calls Svava his 'brúðr' ('bride,' [41]). He directs Svava from henceforward to share her love with his brother Hedin, since he will be soon dead. Svava's answer is significant:

Mælt hafða ec þat í munarheimi
þá er mer Helgi hringa valði
mondiga ec lostig at líðinn fylki 52
í þfur ókunnan armi veria.

She will never lie in the arms of another, any unknown hero, according to the promise she has made at Munarheim. So Helgi dies upon a kiss. Is there any evidence here to assume that

51. Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar, 35.

On a wolf rode there when dusk it was,
A woman who fain would have him follow. [Bellows, p. 287]

52. Ibid., 42.

A vow I had in my dear-loved home
When Helgi sought with rings to have me,
That not of my will if the warrior died,
Would I fold in my arms a man unfamed.
[Bellows, p. 288]

Svava is a valkyrie, other than that the compiler has designated her as such? The poetic text makes it clear that Svava is Helgi's protective 'fylgja.' The compiler insists, however, that Svava be called a valkyrie; the only place the word 'valkyrie' is used in this poem is in the compiler's prose link:

Eylimi hét konungr. Dottir hans var Sváva. Hon var valkyria oc reid lopt oc lög. Hon gaf Helgi nafn þetta oc hlífði hánom opt síðan í orrostom.⁵³

It is apparent that the word was used indiscriminately by compilers of the Edda. I should think that this indiscriminate use of the word 'valkyrie' is the sole reason for confusion concerning the nature of these creatures, and (as we shall shortly see) a major reason for confusion about the figure Sigdrífa.

One final example of the abuse of the concept 'valkyrie' will suffice. In the Helgakviða Hundingsbana II, Helgi is in love with a mortal maiden Sigrun. They are married and have children. Helgi is ultimately killed and Sigrun goes to visit his dead body. At length Sigrun too dies of grief and sorrow. The compiler is not content, however, to let the story stand. He must give this Sigrun a deific aspect—no doubt in order to make her worthy of Helgi, who is a super-hero, to be sure. So the compiler tells us that Sigrun is a valkyrie: "(Hogni's) dottir var Sigrun, hon varð valkyrja oc reid lopt oc lög."

53. The king was called Eylimi; his daughter was Svava. She was a valkyrie and rode far and wide. She gave Helgi that name and shielded him oft in battle. [Bellows, p. 277]

This is the same epithet of a valkyrie that the compiler used in the Helgakviða Hiorvareðssonar. He is not content with this much; rather than let Helgi have two women (Svava was the first), he makes Sigrun a reincarnation of Svava: "hon var Sváva endborinn." This technique is employed by the compiler to the point of absurdity: after Helgi has been killed and Sigrun has died of sorrow, the two are reborn. "Helgi oc Sigrun er kallat at vaeri endborin. Hét hann þá Helgi Haddingjaskati, en honn Kara."⁵⁴ And the compiler's final comment concerning the nature of Kara comes, at this time, as no surprise to us: "oc var hon valkyria."

At this point we may return to the Sigrdrífomál. We have already noted that the woman of this poem is a *völva*. Nowhere else in Norse literature is a valkyrie attributed the power to prophesy and to dispense supernatural knowledge. But from the poetic text text of the Fáfnismál we learn that she was wearing a helmet ("mey und hialmi") and from that of the Sigrdrífomál that she was wearing a byrnie ("hvat beit byrnio?"). That is to say, she was attired in battle dress. (In Chapter IV we shall see that this battle-dress of the woman is derived from the Brynhild of the Nibelungenlied who was a fierce warrior-maiden). But the compiler, failing to consider the *völva* aspect of the woman, designates her a valkyrie. He even names

54. Of Helgi and Sigrun it is said that they were born again; he became Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she was Kara.

[Bellows, p. 330]

her: "hon nefndiz Sigdrífa oc var valkyrja."⁵⁵ Bellows notes that 'sigdrífa' ('victory-bringer') was an epithet in the original Fáfnismál text. "The compiler of the collection, not being familiar with this word, assumed that it was a proper name, and in the prose following stanza 4 of the Sigdrífomál he specifically states that this was the Valkyrie's name. Editors, until recently, have followed him in this error, failing to recognize that 'sigdrífa' was simply an epithet."⁵⁶ To be sure, the name Sigdrífa does not appear in the lists of valkyries in the Grímnismál and the Voluspá; nor does it occur elsewhere in Norse literature. The assumption that the woman is a valkyrie is extremely tenuous; I suggest, on the basis of the mistakes by the compiler already noted, that it is erroneous.

Some of the confusion concerning the woman of the Sigdrífomál disappears. She is a völva. And the myth of awakening a dead völva is connected with the journey to the underworld and the killing of a dragon. Another aspect of this myth was that a hero killed a dragon, and as his reward, won a maiden. By an examination of the valkyrie question and the manner in which the concept 'valkyrie' was abused in the Edda, we decided that the woman was in no wise a valkyrie,

55. "She was named Sigdrífa and was a valkyrie." [Bellows, p. 390]

56. Bellows, The Poetic Edda (Princeton, 1936), p. 385.

but that the confusion resulted from an unfortunate mistake. One aspect of the woman, then, remains to be considered: the warrior-maiden Brynhild, who is found in the Nibelungenlied. We shall now turn to Brynhild and the German legend.

CHAPTER IV

There is substantial proof that the events and the persons of the MHG Nibelungenlied have veracious historical precedence, that is to say, that the Nibelungenlied records the historical events of a people (or peoples, as we shall see) and is not merely a representation of mythical patterns. The slaying of the dragon and awakening of the maiden in the Eddaic version had originated in a ritual vegetation ceremony. But the Burgundian material (which is contained largely in the Nibelungenlied) is attributable to Burgundian and Franconian history. And a great deal of confusion in the Edda results from the fusion of this historical Burgundian material with the mythical material.

One school of criticism, which was mentioned briefly in Chapter II, maintains that the legend of Siegfried is derived from the history of Arminius, the Cheruscan chieftain who defeated three Roman legions under Varus in Teutoburg Forest, 9 A.D. Arminius, according to Velleius Paterculus, was born about 16 B.C. (II, 118). His father was Sigimer, chieftain of the Cherusicans, who occupied what is now Westfalen (westward from the Elbe to the Weser). The Romans (who occupied Germany as far as the Rhine) attempted to move farther to the Elbe. About 7 A.D. Quinctilius Varus was sent from Syria to command in Germania (Tacitus, Annales, II, 10). Varus immediately succeeded in offending the Cherusicans, who became

discontented. A conspiracy among the Cherusicans between Segestes (Arminius' father-in-law) who favored Roman government, and Arminius arose. Arminius was imprisoned by Segestes (Annales, I, 58). The revolt against this imprisonment culminated in the annihilation of three Roman legions, 9 A.D. Germanicus, who was appointed governor of Germania in 12 A.D., at length subdued the Cherusicans, and in 17 A.D. paraded Thusnelda (Arminius' wife) and Thumelicus (his three year old son) among the captives of the German war. Shortly after, Arminius was slain through the treachery of his kindred (Annales, II, 88).

If Siegfried is the legendary representation of Arminius, there is little of the actual history preserved in the legend, other than that Arminius was a valiant warrior and was slain by his kindred. But many personal characteristics of Siegfried and Arminius are coincidental. Vigfusson¹ noted that the names of Arminius' kinsmen show a similar root 'Sig-:': Sigimer (Arminius' father), Segestes (father-in-law of Arminius) and Segimund (Segestes' son).² Similarly, the names of Siegfried's kinsmen (in the Volsunga Saga) show this 'Sig-' root: Sige (his great-great-grandfather), Sigmund (his father), Signy (his aunt), and Sigelinde (his mother). Vigfusson tentatively restores Arminius-Siegfried's name to 'Segifredus.' The name Arminius, then, would have been the Roman equivalent of

1. Grimm Centenary (Oxford, 1885-86), pp. 1-21.

2. Tacitus, Annales, I, 57.

Segifredus' name (since Arminius in all likelihood is a form of 'Irmin,' and would have been appropriate for a preeminent hero). Nor is it unusual that Arminius should be designated by a Roman form of a German name, for as Tacitus relates (Annales, II, 10), he served in the Roman army.

One personal characteristic is peculiar to both men: that they had fiery eyes. I shall quote Hanna's resumé:
 "Velleius says of Arminius: 'Out of whose face and eyes shone the fire of his soul.' (II, 118). In the Volsunga Saga, when King Hjalprek "saw the sharp eyes which he (Sigurd) had in his head, he was glad' (XIII). Fafnir said to Sigurd, 'You boy with the sparkling eyes' (Fáfnismál, 18)." ³ I think we are not warranted in placing the emphasis on this similarity which Hanna has: "To find any closer agreement of legend with history in the delineation of character...would be difficult." ⁴ But it is very possible that a personal characteristic such as fiery eyes would have been remembered of a national hero long after localized incidents had been forgotten.

The question of the native land of Siegfried and Arminius offers another piece of evidence which tends to corroborate their identification. In legend, Siegfried is from 'Francland' in the Frá dauða Sinfjötla, in the Volsunga Saga his forefathers rule in 'Hunaland' (I), and in the Sigurdarkviða hin skamma

3. H. I. Hanna, "Siegfried-Arminius," JEGP XIX (1920), p. 471.

4. Ibid.

Sigurd is the 'Hunnish king.' Hunaland and Francland, according to R. C. Boer, could be appropriate designations of the Cheruscan territory, which in Tacitus' time was between the Elbe and the Weser.⁵ Beneke suggests that Santen of the Nibelungenlied is identical with Xanten, the Castra Vetera of the Romans which would have been the central point for military operations during Arminius' time.⁶ Such evidence would suggest that the legendary Siegfried and the historical Arminius originated in the same territory.

A question to which Hanna has devoted considerable attention is that of Siegfried's hoard. In 1868, near Hildesheim (an area which scholars confirm to be close to the site of the Teutoburg Forest encounter), sixty pieces of silver—including dishes appropriate for cooking and table use—were uncovered. The silver work is unquestionably Roman and unquestionably of the Augustan age. It is very likely that this silver was the booty of the Teutoburg Forest battle, since there had been no great defeat of the Romans either before or after that engagement. And no major Roman army entered that area after Germanicus' victory in 17 A.D. An examination of the craftsmanship of the silverware is more conclusive: two dishes show Rhea-Cybele, a divinity who was worshiped in Syria but not in Greece or Rome during that time. Varus, according to Velleius Paterculus, had been trans-

5. Untersuchung über der Ursprung und die Entwicklung der Nibelungensage (Halle, 1936). p. 60.

6. A. Beneke, Siegfried und die Varusschlacht im Arnsburger Walde (München, 1909), pp. 10-16.

ferred from Syria to Germany. And the bulk of the material alone would suggest that it appertained to a rather large military establishment, not the camp of a temporary campaign. The Hildesheim treasure, then, seems incontestably to have belonged to Varus. And since Arminius defeated Varus, the booty would not only have fallen to the Cherusicans, but specifically to Arminius, their chieftain. If, then, we are prepared to agree with the suggestion in Chapter II, that Arminius' defeat of the Romans was represented in legend by the slaying of the dragon, the winning of the dragon's hoard would be logically the legendary account of Arminius' acquisition of the Hildesheim treasure.

Unfortunately, all this evidence is by no means conclusive. There are other historical theories which seem prima facie more tenable. The material which supports these theories is for the most part derived from early German and Frankish historians and chroniclers: Jordanes (c. 550), Paulus Diaconus (c. 770), Widukind (c. 967), the Quedlinburg Annals (1000), Ekehard (1100), Gregory of Tours (c. 580), Fredegar's Chronicle, the Lex Burgundionum, and the miscellaneous chroniclers Prosper Tire, Prosper Aquitanus, Idatius, Olympiodorus, and Socrates. Several modern historians have attempted to assimilate and decipher this Germanic material in order to establish a correlation between German legend (particularly in the Nibelungenlied) and actual event. Some historical events are indisputably recorded in the Nibelungenlied: the annihilation of the Burgundians by the Huns in 437, and the character

of Attila (Etzel of the Nibelungenlied) for example. The most plausible and most extensive correlation has been made by Schütte.⁷ What follows is largely derived from his findings.

The following events are summarized from Franconian and Burgundian history. In 516, King Sigismund's second wife caused the death of her stepson Sigeric during a feast. In a prose link of the Edda, Sigmund's wife murders her stepson Sinfjotli during a feast. In 523 Sigismund was killed, before the birth of his son, Sigbert II. In the Volsunga Saga, Sigmund was killed before the birth of Sigurd. In 565, Sigbert II, king of Rhenish Franconia, repelled an attack of Danes and Saxons. Guntram of Burgundy remained passive. In both the Nibelungenlied and the Nornagests Páttir Siegfried, king of Rhenish Franconia, repels an attack of Danes and Saxons. Gunther of Gurgundy does not participate. In 566 Sigbert II proposed to a certain Brunhild of Ispania, daughter of Athanagild, a king of the Baldung dynasty, and won her. Guntram's brother married Brunhild's sister. In the Nibelungenlied and certain Eddaic poems, Sigfrid proposes to Brynhild of Isenland, daughter of Atli, a king of the Budlung dynasty, and wins her for Gunther. Sigfrid-Sigurd marries Gunther's sister. In 567, Brunhild's sister was repudiated in favor of a rival. A violent conflict broke out between Brunhild and her sister's rival. In the Edda, Brynhild is forgotten by Sigurd, who marries another princess, Gudrun. In 572, a certain 'hagan' of the Huns (i.e., Chakan or prince) conquered Sigbert II; 'hagan' of Tournay murdered Sigbert II about ten years after

the marriage of Sigbert. The Nibelungenlied record is similar: Hagen of Tronje lived among the Huns as a hostage in childhood; ten years after Siegfried's marriage he murders Siegfried.

To this point the history is approximately chronological and resembles the order of the legendary accounts. There are, however, many historical facts which confuse such an uncomplicated chronological arrangement. We learn, for example, that in 509 Sigbert I, a famous predecessor of Sigbert II, was murdered while hunting east of the Rhine. In one of the Eddaic poems and in the Seyfridslied, Sigfrid is killed while hunting east of the Rhine. In 523, Sigbert II's uncle was killed by the Burgundian king Godomar (a descendant of Gibica). In the Edda, Sigurd is killed by Gottormr, a Burgundian prince. It would seem that the Eddaic figure Sigurd is composite; we shall discuss this aspect of him shortly.

The historical counterparts of Gunther and Kriemhild are not so easily identified. In 493 a certain Chrodhild plotted against her relations (Burgundian princes) who were charged with having murdered some of her family. Kriemhild in the Nibelungenlied plots against her relations—Burgundian princes—because they have murdered her husband. In 532 Chrodhild succeeded in ruining Burgundy (which event is recorded in the Nibelungenlied). In 437 Gunthar of Burgundy had been attacked by the Huns (without Attila's cooperation). Likewise in the Nibelungenlied

7. "The Nibelungen Legend and its Historical Basis," JEGP XX (1921), pp. 291-327; and a more extensive discussion in Arkiv för nordisk filologi XXIII (1907), 1-45.

Gunther was attacked by the Huns without Attila's (Etzel's) cooperation. In 587, the earlier-mentioned Guntram of Burgundy succeeded in establishing a general reconciliation three years after the husband of Brunhild's rival had been murdered. Gunther of Burgundy in the Nibelungenlied also establishes a general reconciliation three and a half years after Siegfried had been murdered. It would seem, in any event, that we are dealing with composite legendary figures. Gunther, for example, embodies attributes of two distinct historical persons: Gunthar of Burgundy and Guntram, also of Burgundy. As Schütte notes, the amalgamation "accounts for the striking contrast in the Nibelungenlied, showing Gunther in Part I as an unwarlike hen-pecked husband (Guntram) and then in Part II suddenly changed to a gallant warrior (old Gunthar)."⁸ Sigfrid-Sigurd evidently reflects aspects of both Sigbert II and Sigbert I, who was killed while hunting east of the Rhine. Kriemhild embodies some aspects of the Burgundian princess Chrodhild.

Let us return momentarily to the Siegfried-Arminius material. We learn from Tacitus that the Germans had a penchant for singing (or reciting) songs about their heroes; in the Annales Tacitus notes (about fifty years after Arminius' death) that songs were sung about Arminius, and would continue to be sung:

Liberator haud dubie Germaniae et qui non primordia
populi Romani, sed florentissimum imperium laccessierit,
proeliis ambiguus, bello non victus. Septem et

8. Ibid., p. 298.

triginta annos vitae duodecim potentiag explevit,
caniturque adhuc barbaras apud gentes.

There were, then, undoubtedly poems concerning the liberator of Germany. But it is understandable, I think, that as the memory of Arminius became less intimate, he was replaced by stories concerning (say) Sigbert II. Certain aspects of Sigbert I (about whom there would also have been folk recollection, if not poems) were combined with recollections of Sigbert II, which were added to the existing framework of an Arminius (Segifredus?) legend. Among different Germanic peoples the material would receive a different emphasis; different characters would be remembered. The Burgundians would recollect different kings and princesses than the Merovingians, for example. The Goths perhaps told a particularly Gothic version. E. O. Winstedt has shown that many aspects of the legendary Siegfried are similar to occurrences in the career of the Gothic Alaric: Alaric's wooing of Placidia, his brother-in-law Ataulf's marriage to her in 414, Ataulf's murder by Sigeric, a Gothic henchman of the Roman Honorius. Winstedt's summary is notable: "I would therefore suggest that the Goths took a song or Sage about Arminius, in which he probably appeared under the name Sigemund as conqueror of the dragon Rome and as subsequently murdered by his wife's family; reduced him to a secondary position as father; and attributed

9. loc.cit., I, ii, 88. The italics are mine.

his feats and fate, combined with their own, to Alaric-Ataulf, as his son Siegfried."¹⁰ Winstedt's comment concerning Siegmund's dragon fight is subject to amplification (cf. supra, Ch. II). But generally he has pointed to what seems to be the method of amalgamation of the Nibelungen material. This material, which may conceivably have begun with Arminius, was modified and enlarged continually as the memory of more recent heroes superseded more ancient heroes, and as various peoples added the exploits of their own particular heroes. The Nibelungenlied is one attempt to unify the diverse material; it was certainly not, as Schneider¹¹ and Thorp¹² demonstrate, the first. The Nibelungenlied contains historical recollections from the date of the fall of the Burgundians to the Huns in 437 to the account of Bishop Pilgrim of Passau and Count Rudiger of Austria (971-991); these two men are represented in the Nibelungenlied by their exact names, and are named as survivors of the Hunnish battle.

It is somewhat beyond the purpose of this essay to explore the composition of the Nibelungenlied more completely. We have, however, adequately demonstrated that a good deal of the Nibelungen material has a historical basis, and that the central figures of the German legend: Siegfried, Brynhild,

10. "Siegfried," Medium Aevum XXI (1952), p. 27.

11. "Verlorene Sigurddichtung," Arkiv för nordisk filologi XLV (1929), pp. 1-34.

12. "The Archetype of the Nibelungen Legend," JEGP XXXVII (1938), pp. 7-17.

Gunther and Kriemhild, have veracious historical prototypes.

Our concern here is to determine in what way this quasi-historical Nibelungen material became amalgamated with the more mythical elements of the Norse version.

In Chapters II and III, I have suggested that the ur-form of the Reginsmál-Fafnismál-Sigrdrífomál sequence concerned a quester seeking supernatural information from Óðinn, from a dragon, and lastly, from a dead völva whom he awakened. On another level of myth, the events could be seen to represent a hero killing a dragon and winning a maiden as reward. These three poems, at any rate, were founded in ritual myth. But to this mythic ur-form were added elements deriving demonstrably from the Germanic Nibelungen legend, which concerned a quasi-historical Brynhild and Siegfried. The combination of German historical material and myth is seen in the Sigrdrífomál: after the woman is awakened we learn that she had aided a certain Agnar in battle with Hjalmar-Gunnar. This Hjalmar-Gunnar is the historical Gunthar. Schütte comments: "Helm-Gunnar... rules a Gothic country and is of advanced age. Everything fits in to identify him with the historical Gunthar, also ruling a Gothic country and obviously old in 436, as he must have been in his prime in 410 when he tried to dethrone the Roman Emperor. Agnar evidently reflects Aetius (Aetius). As "Auda's brother" he belongs to the Audlings, the dynasty of Kiar of Vallond (Fra Fornjófs etimnum) who was the Kaiser or Emperor of the Welsh (Romans). Agnar is young, as Aetius

must have been in 436, for he did not reach his full fame until he defeated Attila in 451."¹³ Schlütte's attempt to establish Odinn as the "embodiment of Gothonic national spirit" and the valkyrie as "the poet's personal sympathy" is far-fetched; we shall see in Chapter V that in all likelihood the sleepthorn incident was included as a result of the compiler's awareness of the 'dornröschen' folktale motif. Certain incidents of the Reginsmál have have correlatives in Merovingian history: Gregory of Tours (Historia Francorum I, 42) mentions a certain Ragnahar, king of Cambrai, who with his counsellor Farro, was noted for treachery and lust. Chlodwig, who overcame Ragnahar and Farro, defeated the Gothic king Alaric in 509, and required the Goths to pay a wergeld by covering a horseman with gold up to the tip of his lance. It is perhaps unsafe to insist, as Schütte has done, that the Goths of history became the Gods of legend. The history, however, closely resembles the Reginsmál version: Odinn and Loki were forced to pay a wergeld for having murdered Otr, a son of king Hreithmar. Hreithmar was slain by his avaricious son Fafnir who stole the wergeld. We noted in Chapter II that this story of treachery and lust had no conceivable connection with the story of Sigurd and the dragon, and that there was no evident explanation for Fafnir's transformation from an avaricious murderer to a garrulous dragon. I suggest that, on the basis of the semblance of the historical events

13. Schütte, op.cit., p. 302.

to the Eddaic events and the similarity of Regin and Fafnir to Ragnahar and Farro, that the revenge-murder interest of the Reginismál had no original connection with the ur-form of a quester and supernatural knowledge, but was likely added randomly by the compiler of the Edda who, it will be remembered, had simultaneously attempted to connect the Reginismál with the Helgi poems.

It is likely that the poet of the Fáfnismál was aware of the German Nibelung material; in the so-called 'Igðnaspá' [40-44] the nuthatch tells Sigurd of green paths that lead to king Gjuki (the Gibich of history) and his daughter, who is, as we learn from the poems following the Great Lacuna, Gudrun.

Liggja til Giúca	groenar brautir
fram vísa scpp	fólclleðondom
þar hefir dýrr konungr	dottur alna.
Þá mundu, Sigurðr,	mundi kaupa. ¹⁴

In the stanza following, however, we are told of the armed woman who lies behind a wall of fire on Hindarfjall. The wall of fire is clearly from the mythic element of the story which we analysed in Chapter III. But we can be certain that the poet knew of the Nibelung legend from his mention of Gjuki's court; it is therefore very probable that he had the Nibelungen version of Brynhild the warrior-maiden in mind when he composed

14. Fáfnismál, 41.

Green the paths	that to Gjuki lead
And his fate the way	to the wanderer shows;
The doughty king	a daughter has,
That thou as bride mayst,	Sigurð, buy.
	[Bellows, p. 384]

these stanzas. In the Nibelungenlied (Adventure 7 in particular) we are told of Brynhild's battle prowess: she can hurl a spear that three men could scarcely lift and throw a rock about seventy feet, yet run and catch it. She is attired in a battle-tunic:

Ein wâfenhemde sîdîn daz leit an sich diu meit
daz in deheime strîte wâfen nie versneit.¹⁵

The similarity of this Nibelungen warrior-maiden and the Eddaic 'mey und hialm' is evident. The northern maiden, however, was adapted to the myth of the dragon-killing.

The confusion of the two versions—of a Nibelungen warrior-maiden Brynhild and a sleeping woman awakened and won by Sigurd—caused later poets much difficulty. The poet of the Grípisspá confused the Nibelungen material with the older myth much in the way that the Fáfnismál poet did. After Sigurd has killed Fafnir and Regin, Gripir prophesies, he will go directly to Gjuki's court [13]. From Gjuki's court (of the Nibelungen version) he will awaken a sleeping warrior-maiden who will dispense to him knowledge concerning runes [17]. Without pursuing this issue further, the Grípisspá poet then has Sigurd journey to Heimir's home where he will sue the maiden Brynhild, daughter of Budli. Quite evidently this poet was confused; but rather than identify Brynhild with the sleeping warrior-maiden (as later poets did), he chose to keep them separate.

15. Zarncke, 438.

A battle tunic silken	the maid upon her drew
That in ne'er a contest	weapon pierced through.
	[Needler, p. 65]

The author of the Volsunga Saga also insisted in separating the events of the Sigrdrífomál from the events of the Nibelungen legend. In Chapter XX Sigurd, after receiving information concerning a fair maiden at Hindfell, sees a great fire surrounding a shield castle. Within the castle lay a sleeping warrior. Sigurd awakens the warrior; it is Brynhild. Brynhild then gives Sigurd much advice concerning runes (which material is directly reproduced from the Sigrdrífomál) and they are betrothed [XXI]. After a pause of one chapter [XXII] to describe the array of Sigurd, we are told that Sigurd rides to the land of Heimir (Heimir is Brynhild's brother-in-law). Here he again encounters Brynhild, and in their conversation there is no mention of the previous meeting [XXIV]. This time Brynhild is a lavishly ornamented courtly princess. She insists, nonetheless, that she is a shield maiden. She gives a brief and incongruous prophecy to the effect that Sigurd will wed Gudrun, Gjuki's daughter. The author then tells us that they are betrothed anew. In Chapter XXV we are abruptly introduced to the court of Gjuki. Sigurd weds Gudrun; to facilitate the obviation of his double betrothal to Brynhild, he drinks a potion which makes him forget her completely. From this point the Volsunga Saga author follows the Nibelungen version: Sigurd and Gunnar fare to Hlymdale to woo Brynhild for Gunnar. Instead of the simple courage test of the Nibelungenlied, however, the man worthy of Brynhild must ride through a wall of fire. Gunnar's horse will not go through the flame, so Sigurd in

Gunnar's guise rides through the flame and wins Brynhild for Gunnar.

Presumably the author of the Volsunga Saga knew both the mythic Sigrdrífomál story and the originally unrelated Nibelungen version. His attempt to amalgamate these two versions is amusing: he employs the fire-ride incident twice—with the original Sigrdrífomál material and later imposes it upon the Nibelungen legend. From the Grípisspá he would seem to have derived the character Heimir; it also seems that Bekkhild and Alswid (Heimir's wife and son) are fictitious inventions of the author. What he has done, in short, is to amalgamate the Sigrdrífomál fire-ride myth to the Nibelungen legend by means of Heimir's court. Thus, after having awakened the sleeping warrior-maiden, Sigurd sees her again in Heimir's court. And it is to this castle that he and Gunnar later ride [XXVII] to woo Brynhild.

The poems of the Codex Regius after the Great Lacuna take cognizance, in one way or other, of the Nibelungen material. The Brot af Sigurdarkvida and the Sigurdarkvida hin skamma follow closely the events of the Nibelungenlied. The Helreið Brynhildar attempts to fuse the two separate versions: Brynhild of the Nibelungen version becomes identified as a valkyrie. The author of this poem evidently reproduced the mistaken identity of the Sigrdrífomál which we examined in Chapter III. Although Brynhild here is explicitly a valkyrie, there is the recollection that she was raised at Hlymdale (Heimir's court).

It is also possible that she was Atli's sister (as she is elsewhere in the Edda), although she may have had eight sisters (depending upon the interpretation of the crucial 'atta systra—atla systor' [6]). She is called 'Hildi und hjalm.' I think the author's reasoning is here discoverable: assuming her to be a valkyrie, he attempted to locate her name in the valkyrie-lists of Grímnismál and Völuspá; the only name he could find that bore any similarity to 'Brynhild' was of course 'Hild.' He hastily concluded that they were identical. Hild was the bloodthirsty valkyrie of the Darradarljóð, whereas Brynhild is a warrior-maiden from Nibelungen legend. Then the poet adds the incident concerning Hjalm-Gunnar and Agnar from the prosa of the Sigrdrífomál [8]. To the shield castle (which would seem to be a late ratiocination of the original fire-wall) of the Sigrdrífomál he adds his own particular embroidery: it becomes a red and white shield wall.

Lauc hann mik scioldom í Skatalundi
raudom oc hvítom randir snurto.

Skatalund does not appear elsewhere; it appears synonymous with Hindarfjall. After having enclosed Brynhild in the shield-circle, the poet then adds the wall of fire (which surrounds her hall).

16. Helreið Brynhildar, 9.

He beset me with shields in Skatalund,
Red and white, their rims o'erlapped.
[Bellows, p. 445]

Lét um sal minn sunnanverðan¹⁷
 hávan brenna her allz víðar.

The ending of the Helreid Brynhildar follows the Nibelungen legend.

Snorri in the Prose Edda also jumbles the events concerning Brynhild. His account must be quoted in full:

Sigurð rode on then until he came to a hall on a mountain. In it was a woman in helmet and coat of mail. He drew his sword and cut the mail from her. Then she woke up and said she was called Hild. Her name was called Brynhild and she was a valkyrie.¹⁸

Snorri has followed the Sigrðrífomál introduction except that (like the author of Helreid Brynhildar) he has presumed Hild to be identical with Brynhild. From here he leaps to Gjuki's court.

Soon after Sigurð and the sons of Gjuki went to ask Atli Buðlason for his sister Brynhild, as Gunnar's wife. She lived at Hindarfjall and there was a rampart of flame around her hall. She vowed to marry that man who dared to ride through the flames.¹⁹

This account resembles the Volsunga Saga version. From this point, Snorri follows the two short Sigurð lays. Brynhild in these lays is the daughter of Buðli (in history, one of the Baldung dynasty, as we noted earlier). In the Helreid Brynhildar the aforementioned corruption ('atla systor')

17. Ibid., 10.

He let round my hall that southward looked,
 The branches foe high leaping burn. [Bellows, p. 445]

18. The Prose Edda, tr. J. Young, p. 113.

19. Ibid., p. 114.

may conceivably suggest that Brynhild is Atli's sister. Snorri combines both versions: Brynhild is the sister of Atli, and Atli becomes the son of Buðli. Heimir of the Grípisspá and Völsunga Saga is omitted.

At length we may understand what confusion resulted from the introduction in the North of the quasi-historical Nibelungen legend. Brynhild of the Nibelungenlied is combined with the völvu whom the quester awakens after the journey through the wall of fire; later poets concern themselves with integrating these two clearly disparate legends. It remains for us to analyse later accretions to the Sigurd-Brynhild material, in particular, courtly love convention and folk-tale motifs which later poets seemed to be aware of. To these accretions we now turn.

CHAPTER V

Towards the close of the Middle Ages (1200-1400) the assembled body of traditional legend and saga underwent a noteworthy and far-reaching modification. Shortly before 1100 a conventionalized conception of love appeared in Southern France (Provence) and spread rapidly to the rest of Europe. It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine precisely what this conception encompassed; Jeanroy,¹ Lewis,² D'Arcy,³ Denomy,⁴ and Valency,⁵ have made extensive analyses. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that the (originally Provençal) conception of courtly love, which was in France called 'amour courtois' spread to Germany and became consolidated in the 'minnesang' tradition. The poet of the Nibelungenlied was demonstrably aware of the 'amour courtois' convention.

The Nibelungenlied was oriented towards a courtly audience; the poet devotes much space to descriptions of the fashionable finery of the court and of the courtly behaviour of the principal characters. As the hero Siegfried enters the realm of King Gunther, the ladies of the court attire themselves lavishly:

1. La Poésie Lyrique des Troubadours (Paris, 1934).

2. The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1936).

3. The Mind and Heart of Love (New York, 1958).

4. The Heresy of Courtly Love (New York, 1947).

5. In Praise of Love (New York, 1961).

Dâ wart ûz den kisten gesuochet guot gewant:
 swaz man in der valde der liechten waete vant,
 porten unde pouge, des was in vil bereit.
 sich zierte minneclîche vil manec waetlîche meit.⁶

The concern of the courtly man, as Sir Metz of Ortwein explains, is with love and woman. It is perhaps superfluous to note that this concern is diametrically opposite to the concern of heroic poetry—with fighting and warlike virtue.

Waz waere mannes wûnne des freute sich ir lîp,
 ez entaeten schoene meide unt hêrlîchiu wîp?⁷

The Nibelungenlied abounds in the clichés of courtly poetry: the ladies are fair, the lovers pale, wan and servile, the time is spring. When Kriemhild, "the delight of every eye" appears, she is compared to the sun emerging from morning mist—a refreshing simile, had it not occurred before in countless Provençal texts:

Nu gie diu minneclîche alsô der morgenrôt
 tuot ûz den trueben wolken. dâ schiet von maneger nôt
 der si dâ truog in herzen unt lange hêt getân.
 er sach die minneclîchen nu vil hêrlîchen stân.⁸

6. Zarncke, 278.

Then in well-stored wardrobes rich attire they sought,
 And forth from folding covers their glittering dresses
 brought,
 Armbands and silken girdles of which they many had,
 And zealous to adorn her was then full many a maid.
 [Needler, p. 43]

7. Ibid., 276.

What were a man's chief pleasure, his very joy of life,
 An't were not a lovely maiden or a stately wife?
 [Needler, p. 42]

8. Ibid., 283.

Now came she fair and lovely, as the ruddy sun of morn
 From misty clouds emerging. Straight he who long had borne
 Her in his heart and loved her, from all his gloom was freed,
 And so stately there before him he saw the lovely maid.
 [Needler, p. 43]

Accordingly, when Sîfrit sees Kriemhild, he is overwhelmed with joy, as a youth in spring. The mention of May in connection with his amorous elation is another courtly cliché:

Bî der sumerzîte unt gein des meien tagen
 kunder in sînem herzen nimmer mê getragen,
 minneclîcher freuden, denn er ir dô gewan
 dô im diu gie sô nâhen, die er ze trûte wolde hân.⁹

It is unnecessary to provide more examples than these already given. The point is this: that the Nibelungenlied poet added to a body of material of largely heroic interest a layer of courtly convention in order to provide love interest. Heroic encounters with dragons are replaced by jousting tilts and fine apparel. The vengeful Kriemhild is described in courtly terms as the morning sun; Brynhild the warrior maiden, who can hurl stones and spears further than any man, is nonetheless repeatedly described as the 'snow-white maiden.' The comitatus of fighting warriors is dispersed into an aggregate of chivalric knights concerned (as the speech of Ortwein showed) more with courtly pastimes than actual combat.

Evident courtly accretions are not as abundant in Norse literature as in continental literature; the northern versions of the Siegfried-Brynhild myth do not reveal the obvious editorial remodelling to satisfy courtly audience that the Nibelungenlied shows. This may be due in part to the fact that

9. Zarncke, 297.

In the sunny summer season and in the month of May
 Had his heart seen never before so glad a day.
 Nor one so fully joyous, as when he walked beside
 That maiden rich in beauty whom fain he'd choose as bride.
 [Needler, p. 45]

Iceland and mainland Scandinavia remained somewhat removed from continental influence—by geographical distance as much as anything. Also, less frequent commercial contact with the major French and German courtly centres would limit the spread of 'amour courtois' convention to isolated Scandinavia. Which is not to suggest that Scandinavia remained in total isolation; in literature dated later than approximately 1200 we begin to see the appearance of the term 'kurteis' and its correlated accoutrements.

There is no doubt that the author of the Volsunga Saga was thoroughly familiar with the code of continental 'amour courtois.' One event in particular suggests his acquaintance with German 'minnesang' tradition. In Chapter XXIV Sigurd's hawk or falcon flies up to a high tower and thereby locates Brynhild:

...Sigurd rode into the wood with a hawk, and hound, and men thronging; and whenas he came home his hawk flew up to a high tower and sat him down on a certain window. Then fared Sigurd after his hawk, and he saw there a fair woman, and knew that it was Brynhild...

Hawks or falcons figure prominently in minne-symbolism of continental courtly convention. Nordmeyer has discussed the significance of this symbolism in connection with Kürenberg's falcon stanzas (in Des Minnesangs Frühling): "...a lady, looking out for her lover, salutes a falcon flying past who is free to fly and to choose as he pleases. She likens herself

10. The Volsunga Saga, tr. Wm. Morris (New York, 1909), p. 328.

to him in that she also freely chose a lover, to the envy of other women. Here the falcon, in his freedom of flight and his freedom of choice is stated to be the symbol for the lady's freedom of desire and freedom of selection."¹¹ A brief recollection of the first part of Andreas' De Arte Honesti Amandi or of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules (where a formel eagle has freedom of choice) would emphasize the importance attached to the lady's power of choice in medieval courtly literature. A falcon dream similar to that of Kriemhild in the Nibelungenlied occurs in Chapter XXV of the Völsunga Saga.

Gudrun answers: "I dreamed that I had a fair hawk on my wrist feathered with feathers of gold."

Says the woman: "Many have heard tell of thy beauty, thy wisdom, and thy courtesy; some king's son abides thee, then."

Gudrun answers, "I dreamed that naught was so dear to me as this hawk, and all my wealth had I cast aside rather than him."

The woman said, "Well, then, the man thou shalt have will be of the goodliest, and well shalt thou love him."¹²

This particular incident seems to have been adapted from an unknown Eddaic poem (according to Heusler¹³) solely for its 'minnesang' love interest. It is a convention appropriate to courtly love.

Besides this above example which seems to be derived

11. "Source Studies on Kriemhild's Falcon Dream," GR XV (1940), p. 293.

12. op.cit., p. 331.

13. "Die Quelle der Brünhildsage in Thidreks saga und Nibelungenlied," Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Literaturgeschichte [für] Wilhelm Braune, (Dortmund, 1920).

directly from minnesinger literature, there are many details in the Volsunga Saga which reveal the author's awareness of courtly convention. In Chapter XXIV a certain Alswid ('all-knowing') appears; he counsels Sigurd in his suit of Brynhild, expatiates on the nature of love, and then disappears. Sigurd is discussing Brynhild:

Alswid said: "Give not all thine heed to one woman
being such a man as thou art; ill life to sit
lamenting for what we may not have."¹⁴

Because these words of Alswid so well resemble the words of countless counsellors or confidants of continental literature, it is more than likely that the Volsunga Saga author contrived Alswid to be Sigurd's gardador (the Provençal term); when Sigurd had won his suit and become betrothed to Brynhild, the gardador was no longer needed, and consequently does not re-appear. The same seems true of Bekkhild, whose name was contrived as a parallel to Brynhild, and which suggests (as the author tells us) that "she had bidden at home and learned handicraft, whereas Brynhild had fared with helm and byrny into the wars, wherefore she was called Brynhild."¹⁵ Bekkhild does not appear elsewhere; her occupation with sewing is comparable to the continental 'chansons de toile' which generally are concerned with the finery of dress fashioned by the courts. In fact, in the Volsunga Saga, there is no elaboration of Brynhild as warrior-maiden at all; she becomes,

14. op.cit., p. 329.

15. Ibid., p. 327.

like her sister Bekkhild, a courtly lady who sits in a bower and sews:

(Brynhild)...sat in her bower with her maidens and could more skill in handicraft than other women; she sat, overlaying cloth with gold, and sewing thereon the great deeds which Sigurd had wrought...¹⁶

In this respect, Brynhild resembles the Brynhild of the Oddrúnagráttr, who also sits in a bower weaving.

The entire Völsunga Saga is concerned with love interest. Sigdrifa the obscure völva disappears; Brynhild adopts some characteristics of the so-called Sigdrifa, but at the end of their talk, Sigurd and Brynhild become betrothed (unlike the Sigrdrífomál). This betrothal, in fact, has led some scholars (notably Boer¹⁷) to suggest that the Völsunga Saga author was following certain engagement stanzas of the Sigrdrífomál which are not now extant. Such a conclusion fails to take into account the obvious editorial predilection of the author: to remove or modify those traces of the legend which were not amenable to courtly love convention. So zealous was the author that his results are at times absurd; Sigurd, the heroic dragon-slayer of the Edda, pines as grievously for the love of Brynhild as any Provençal troubadour. Furthermore, his horse and hawk pine as well. Alswid addresses Sigurd in these words:

16. Ibid., p. 328.

17. "Sigrdrífumál und Helreidh," ZfdP XXXV (1903), p. 290.

"Why art thou so bare of bliss? this manner of thine grieveth us thy friends; why then wilt thou not hold to thy gleesome ways? Lo, thy hawks pine now, and thy horse Grani droops; and long will it be ere we are booted thereof."¹⁸

An author who would exercise his knowledge of courtly convention so extravagantly would scarcely have required a source in the Sigrdrífomál to establish the betrothal of Sigurd and Brynhild.

Poems of the Edda do not show as full an awareness of courtly convention as does the Volsunga Saga. There are, however, occasional incidents in the demonstrably later poems which indicate such an awareness. In the Oddrúnagráttr, for example, there is what resembles a castle allegory similar to that used by Jean de Meun in the final books of the Roman de la Rose: Brynhild's virtue is a castle which is besieged by Sigurd, but finally conquered [16-17]. In the Helreid Brynhildar, the final stanza suggests the possibility of everlasting love for Sigurd and Brynhild:

Muno við ofstríð allz til lengi
konor oc karlar qvicqvir foedaz;
Við scolom ocrom ¹⁹ aldri slíta,
Sigurðr, saman...

The possibility of eternal love is not an aspect of courtly love alone, but it is an aspect which appears in continental courtly poetry. To attempt to decide at this point whether

18. op.cit., p. 329.

19. Helreid Brynhildar, 14.

Ever with grief and all too long
Are men and women born in the world.
But we shall live our lives together,
Sigurd and I... [Bellows, p. 446]

courtly love influenced Christianity or vice versa would be trifling; at any rate, the eternal love of Sigurd and Brynhild is an apparently late accretion to the material. Whether its source be courtly love or Christianity is irrelevant. It is interesting to note that other examples of Christian belief occur in the material which we are examining. The latter stanzas of the Sigrdrífomál [22-37] are evidently Christian in content. These stanzas seem to be a versification of the Ten Commandments. Their Christian import is clear: do not commit adultery [28]; curb your revenge [22]; tell the truth [23]. The Christian ritual of burying the dead in coffins is explicitly mentioned in Stanza 34—the dead person is to be combed and dried, "aðr í kisto fari oc biðio saelan sofa." The peaceful sleep provides an appropriate contrast to the terrible suttee of the Siegfried legend.

Awareness of courtly convention and (as in the case of the Helreid) Christian after-life are additions of a later age to the earlier heroic legend. One other aspect of the later material must be examined. There is some reason to suspect that the compiler of the Sigrdrífomál was aware of a märchen motif, that of Dornröschen. As Obenauer notes, "es ist mehr als wahrscheinlich, dass die Heldensage schon vorhandene Märchen benutzte, für ihre Zwecke umformte und stilisierte..."²⁰ There is not a great deal of resemblance

20. Das Märchen (Frankfort, 1959), p. 59.

between the dornröschen märchen and the events recorded in the prosa of the Sigrdrífomál. In the märchen, Dornröschen is put to sleep by a magic spindle. Her homestead is motionless from the time she falls into her magic sleep. She is surrounded by a thorn-hedge. Many adventurers perish while attempting to penetrate the hedge. At length a hero penetrates the thorn-hedge and touches Dornröschen to awaken her. Life on the homestead resumes exactly at the point of departure. In the Sigrdrífomál, Sigrdrifa has been put to sleep by Odinn for her insubordination; the prosa does not explicitly state that Odinn put her behind a firewall, but only that he put her to sleep. She can only be wedded to the man who is courageous enough to penetrate the wall of fire. It is apparent that this version faintly resembles the märchen version. The process of assimilation seems fairly evident: the late compiler of the Edda was aware of the dornröschen motif and simply added it to the existing material in order to give some explanation for the otherwise inexplicable fact that a woman was awakened by a hero who crossed a wall of fire. It cannot be assumed that this late compiler realized the mythic significance of the firewall and the dead woman; he therefore presumed the story as he found it to be a variant of the märchen theme. So that to the existing material, he added the rationale of Odinn imprisoning a valkyrie for insubordination. As we have seen, there was no original, integral connection between the dead völva, the historic Hjalm-Gunnar-Agnar material, and the valkyrie

(a false assumption) and Dornröschen. But the compiler, attempting to organize the material, presumed it to be the form of a (to him) better known märchen motif; hence the present form of the Sigr-dríformál. All of which is not to suggest that the märchen-motif is a later outgrowth of a mythic Erweckungssage; rather, because a late editor knew a märchen better than an eschatological myth, he made a false assumption. At the time of composition, then, the myth would have been separate from the märchen.²¹

The same sort of adaptation has occurred, I think, with the dragon material of the Seyfridslied. The author of this quite late composition, having before him the older evidence of a hero who killed a dragon, then penetrated a firewall to awaken a sleeping woman, changed somewhat this pattern to make it agree in form with what likely to him was a well known märchen: the Drachenkampf märchen. Thus in the Seyfridslied, a dragon has carried off a princess (Kriemhild), and is holding her until such time as he is transformed again into a human

21. DeVries (Heroic Song and Heroic Legend, p. 217) notes that a historical life can be reshaped to accord with a myth: "A figure like the definitely historical King Cyrus also shows very clearly that his actual life has been shaped according to the prototype of an heroic pattern...There has been no question here of a gradual development; at a certain moment people saw in him...no longer an ordinary mortal but a true hero..." The same sort of adaptation occurred with the existing material and the prototype of the märchen. Obenauer affirms this possibility: "So erscheinen uns die ältesten Märchen heute nicht nur als verkleinerte, ins Volk abgesunkene Mythen, sondern einzelne Märchenmotive bestanden schon lange unabhängig vom hohen Götter- und Heldenmythus; ja sie konnten in diesen im veränderter Gestalt eingehen." op.cit., p. 57.

being (he is a bewitched prince), Seyfrid kills this dragon and rescues the maiden. The additional element here is that the dragon has first abducted the woman; this motive appears in no other version than the drachenkampf m rchen. To the late author who did not realize the mythic significance of the fire-wall and the sleeping woman, the material could easily be organized to fit the form of the m rchen, and the material which did not fit this form was eliminated—the firewall and the suspended sleep, for example. It is fairly evident, then, that these two m rchen motives in the Siegfried-Brynhild material are late accretions.

The Edda as we have it was assembled late. This late composition is attested by the various awarenesses of courtly love convention and marchen motives. As the Siegfried-Brynhild material was remodelled to suit the taste of a courtly audience, various aspects of the earlier poetry were expunged. The quest for supernatural knowledge and the awakening of a v lva disappear, in the Ridreks Saga, for example. The dragon which guarded the realm of death is forgotten and replaced by a flying dragon who abducts princesses. Sigurd becomes in the Seyfridslied the marchen-hero who frees the princess by killing the dragon. The valkyrie aspect of the woman is incommensurate with courtly atmosphere and is subsequently eliminated. To approach the poems with any hope of understanding them, the various layers of civilization which are represented in the poems must be analysed. With the framework that I have outlined, I think, a more extensive examination of the layering process of the Edda could be undertaken.

CONCLUSION

The intent of the thesis was to examine the character of Sigdrifa-Brynhild in the light of recent knowledge of folklore and primitive religion, of which earlier scholars of the Edda were unaware. As various strands of the Sigdrifa material were examined (her valkyrie nature, the 'memory-drink', or her connection with Sigurd and hence Sigurd's connection with a dragon), it became evident that earlier interpretations of the Reginsmál-Fáfnismál-Sigrdrífomál sequence were untenable; that, for instance, R. C. Boer's contention that the Sigrdrífomál derived from two original poems could not be maintained in the light of Sigdrifa's supernatural character. Thus, the examination revealed that the Reginsmál-Fáfnismál-Sigrdrífomál sequence had as its basis the theme of a quester acquiring supernatural knowledge: Sigurd, in the Reginsmál, acquired supernatural knowledge from Óðinn, the god of the dead; in the Fáfnismál he was instructed by a dragon: our analysis in Chapter II showed that dragons were in Norse mythology invariably associated with after-life, and that there was sound evidence that the Fáfnismál-dragon had originally the function of instructing Sigurd in supernatural knowledge; that the woman whom Sigurd awakened in the Sigrdrífomál, because of her resemblances to vǫlvas in other Eddaic poems, was likely awakened from the dead, in order to instruct Sigurd about the supernatural realm. It became apparent, then, that the connecting thread of these three poems was the attempt to initiate an earthly quester in the knowledge of the dead; the quester acquired this knowledge from Óðinn, a dragon,

and a vǫlva respectively.

At this point the difficulty arose—that other aspects of the Sigrdrífomál woman: her valkyrie nature and her romantic aspect (as it appears in the Vǫlsunga Saga)—were incommensurable with her vǫlva nature. So an attempt was made to ascertain precisely what a valkyrie was; it was found that this woman in no wise resembled valkyries that appeared elsewhere in Norse literature, and that the only reason she was considered a valkyrie at all is that a compiler of the Edda had named her so. On the basis of mistaken identities made elsewhere by Eddaic compilers, Sigrdrifa's valkyrie aspect was dismissed. The remainder of the thesis concerned itself with Brynhild as she occurs in the Nibelungen cycle, and with the romantic nature of the story, which, after some examination, appeared to be a late accretion to the body of assembled myth. This accretion apparently occurred at a time when the influence of 'amour courtois' convention was most pervasive in civilized Europe. And the 'amour courtois' conventions eventually replaced the more ancient and primitive aspects of Sigrdrifa.

By dealing with all the available material in which the figure Sigrdrifa-Brynhild occurs—in particular, however, the Norse Eddaic versions and the German Nibelungenlied—we were able to discern the probable sources of this character's nature, and that the final composite figure which occurred in late sources such as the Seyfridslied or the Thidreks Saga reflected elements of the diverse sources which contributed to the character.

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ERRATA

- p. 7. Four lines from C.p. märchen
- p. 9. M.p. Hyphen after "dragon" at end of line.
- p. 10. 5 lines down: first word "and" not "had."
- p. 16. Second paragraph. S. & the B. cycle have or S. in the
B. cycle has.
- p. 43. fn. 37 listed as 36.
- p. 55. 1. 2. Underline Nibelungenlied;
1. 2. "precedence" for "precedents."
- p. 56. 7 lines from bottom. "Arminis" for "Arminius."
- p. 60. M.p. "Gugundy" for "Burgundy."
- p. 60. Second last line: the 'hagan' of Tournay.
- p. 64. Rüdiger.
- p. 66. 8 lines down. "have" repeated twice.
- p. 66. last line. "semblance" for "resemblance."
- p. 67. 1. 3. "woth" for "with"
- p. 76. End of first paragraph: "showed" for "shows."
- p. 82. Second last line. "für"
- p. 85. M.p. märchen
- p. 85. 8 lines up from C.p. märchen-hero.

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